Statement of Purpose

Description

Sparks Fostering Statement of Purpose

https://sparksfostering.org/wp-content/uploads/speaker/post-71.mp3?cb=1735405765.mp3

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Sparks Fostering philosophy

The philosophy behind Sparks Fostering is that all of us have sparks within us which can be nurtured to grow into beautiful, spectacular fireworks that illuminate the lives of others.

If our sparks are not appropriately nurtured, they can become self-destructive or damaging; however, with appropriate intervention even the most neglected and harmful fires can be redirected to being useful and beautiful. Sparks Fostering recognises that for many of the children in our care, their ‘sparks’ have been dulled, diverted and diminished, so the children aren’t thriving. We work together as an agency to find the gifts and talents of all the children in our care and we nurture the children’s potential so they can thrive and be the best they can be.



We also apply the same principles towards our foster carers and staff; many adults haven’t yet fulfilled their potential or made the best use of the innate talents they have. We will support each other to be the best we can be, both within our roles in the fostering work, and also outside the work, so that we can reach our potential and grow to use the skills and natural abilities that we have. By being lifelong learners with a growth mindset, we are role models for the children in our care, who will see that

growth and learning is exciting, rewarding and life-affirming.

Sparks Fostering was established in 2022 by Tay Jiva MBE, who is a qualified and experienced social worker, and she is the Registered Manager for the agency.

The head office for Sparks Fostering is in central Manchester and the agency operates throughout England.

Status and constitution

Sparks Fostering is registered with Companies House under the company name of Social Work Enterprise (Company Number: 12227041). Tay Jiva MBE is the sole Director of Social Work Enterprise. Sparks Fostering was registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

Sparks Fostering **objectives**

- To recruit, train and support an experienced and motivated staff team who keep the needs of the child/ren central to their motivation to work and who are aspirational for the success and happiness of the children in our care.
- Strategically recruit, assess, train and support prospective foster parents: Sparks Fostering recruits and assesses prospective foster parents; trains the parents so they are able to offer the best level of care to the children; matches children to the homes which are most likely to suit the needs of the child; supports the foster parents and children as they build their relationship; supervises foster parents and staff; and offers support, training and supervision to staff and foster parents. All of these core functions are expanded upon in considerable detail in later policies and procedures and are central to the training topics offered to foster parents, other fostering family members, and to Sparks Fostering staff.
- Matching fostering families with children in the care of the local authority: Sparks Fostering is an independent fostering provider which matches fostering families with children in the care of the local authority who are aged between 0 to 18 years (although Sparks Fostering may support foster carers to look after young people up to the age of 21 under ‘staying put’ arrangements when required to do so).
- Recruitment of foster parents is geared towards meeting the needs of children who are waiting for placement; therefore, reasonable effort will be made to ensure the demographics of foster parents reflect the diversity of children who are waiting for fostering homes.

Sparks Fostering values and principles

Sparks Fostering staff and foster carers understand that whenever possible, children are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives. However, compulsory intervention in family life is sometimes necessary in order to safeguard a child and promote their welfare.

Sparks Fostering aims to, where possible, support rather than undermine the parental role. The significance of contact for children looked after, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster

parent’s role in this.

Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent care and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.

Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.

Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account. The child’s wishes and feelings should always be established and taken into account when taking decisions in respect of children looked after.

The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account

Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.

Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions.

Foster parents are required by their Foster Care Agreement to care for any child placed as if the child was a child of the foster parent’s family. The default position should be that the foster parent does not treat the child differently to their own children (other than to meet the specific needs of the children in the home).

Foster parents have an important contribution to make in planning and decision making about the child

The central importance of the child’s relationship with their foster parent is acknowledged and the work of the wider team around the child will be undertaken in a way that strengthens and supports the role of the foster parent.

Foster parents are recognised as having (or developing) the skill, knowledge, expertise, self-awareness, commitment and the ability to work as part of the team around the child

Sparks Fostering and responsible authorities value and promote the central role of foster parents as part of the wider team, not just caring for and supporting the child, but also contributing to planning for the child, for example through attending reviews and meetings with other professionals concerned with the child.

Foster parents have a right to full information about the child.

Services and facilities provided by Sparks Fostering

Sparks Fostering recruits, assesses, trains, and supervises foster carers and fostering staff. The purpose of the work is to supply high quality fostering provision.

1. Assessment of foster carers

Initial enquiry and application

The first stage of the application is to complete the Free Quiz, which is available on the agency website and can be completed by the prospective applicant themselves, or with the support of Sparks Fostering recruitment staff. Phone calls and online calls will be booked to discuss completion of application paperwork.

Home visits and assessment

When application paperwork is completed, an appointment for a home visit will be booked by a qualified social worker, who will complete the assessment. Training is also provided during this stage and applicants are expected to have reviewed the information on the Sparks Fostering main web pages (including this Statement of Purpose).

Panel and approval

The completed assessment report is presented to the Sparks Fostering Panel. Applicants are invited to attend the Panel (and can bring a supporter if they wish to). The Panel will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster carers. The comments and recommendation from panel will be passed to a senior manager in Sparks Fostering, who is nominated as the organisation's Agency Decision Maker, who has the final decision about approval on behalf of Sparks Fostering.

Further information about the assessment process and panel is available via the Sparks Fostering policies.
Click here to see information about assessments. Click here to read further information about foster carer approval.

2. Training and development

Training record

We are committed to maintaining and developing the highest standards for all our services and our training and development programmes are central to this. All carers and staff have a Training Record which is reviewed regularly throughout their time with Sparks Fostering.

Information on the Sparks Fostering website

The Sparks Fostering website is a very detailed source of information for prospective foster carers and for approved foster carers. Foster carers and staff record which sections of the website they have read on their Training Record and they answer the questions specific to the training topic. Carers and staff also review the training topic during supervision sessions. There is also an opportunity to reflect on training topics during online workshops.

Preparation to foster training

Introductory information and training are provided by Sparks Fostering during the assessment of foster carers. The training is compulsory as it provides the basic knowledge needed before a child can be placed into a fostering home.

1st year of fostering training: TSDS

It is a compulsory requirement that all newly approved foster carers complete 'Training Support and Development Standards' within the first year of approval. Supervising social workers support foster carers to complete the TSDS questions. The questions are integrated into the Sparks Fostering training records.

Bespoke training

Bespoke training and/or support is offered to meet the specific needs of children in our care, and the needs of foster carers and staff.

Further pre-approval information about training is available here.
Post-approval (detailed) information about training is available here.

3. Supervision and support

Sparks Fostering supervising social workers are qualified and experienced staff. The roles of the supervising social workers include:

- Maintain frequent contact with the foster carers and children in the home through visits, virtual (online) visits, and telephone calls.
- Make unannounced visits to the foster home at least once a year (during this visit the home will be checked, including kitchen cupboards, and the children in the home will be spoken with).
- Provide advice, guidance and support to the foster carer on their care of children in the home.
- Participate in out-of-hours support to foster carers, which results in a 24/7 support service for foster carers every day of the year.
- Co-ordinate other support services as appropriate e.g., support work, respite care provision.
- Liaise with other professional service providers who may be involved and contribute to formal meetings about care plans.
- Identify and help respond to foster parents' training needs.
- Keep careful records of the progress of the children in the home.

Foster carers are also subject to annual reviews. A first review is presented to panel within 12 months

of approval and subsequent reviews take place within every 12 months thereafter (but may not be presented to panel). Sparks Fostering must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the terms of their approval.

Reviews may also take place at other times for example as a result of a request to change the terms of approval, following a serious complaint, allegation of abuse, or other matters of serious / safeguarding concern.

4. Allowances and fees

Foster carers are given an allowance to meet the needs of the children in their care – the allowance covers the increased cost to the home in terms of bills, food, transport, clothing for the child, trips out etc. A fee is also given to foster carers to remunerate for the extensive training, meetings, paperwork and other professional tasks that are required of foster carers. The allowance and fees makes it possible for families with limited income to be able to care for the children.

The exact amount of the fee is dependent on the needs of the children, which in turn is linked to the knowledge, experience and capacity of the foster carers.

An outline of fees can be seen here.

5. Fostering placements.

Sparks Fostering offers a wide range of placements for children and young people (between ages of 0 to 17 at the start of placement) with foster carers. All children and carers 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.

Emergency placement.

Sparks Fostering provides a twenty-four hour service. Foster carers who are able to do so are asked to accept unplanned, emergency placements for individual children or sibling groups.

Short term/task-centred placements.

Short term placements can last for up to two years, while long-term plans are being formulated. Short term placements work towards specific goals. These may include assessment placements (giving time for the child’s social worker to complete an assessment), bridging (to prepare a child for a move to another type of placement) and preparation for adoption, permanency or placements which meet other specific care plan objectives.

Bridging and transitions placements

A bridging or transitions placement generally forms part of a longer-term plan for a child or young person. In such placements Sparks Fostering parents work with children and their families toward reunification with birth family or prepare children people for joining adoptive or long term/permanent

fostering families, or for moving to a semi-independent or an independent living arrangement. Transitions placements support children and young people to move from residential placements to a family environment (the plan may include remaining in foster care). These children require their foster parents to have specific skills, who can form attachments with children quickly and can identify and meet the development needs of the children.

Long-term and permanent placements

For some children the long term plan for them is to remain in foster care until age 18; if the child is (or becomes) settled with a particular fostering family, a match may be agreed for the child to remain with the same fostering family until age 18 (or beyond). The advantage to the child/ren of permanent placements is that it can give them stability and can help to develop the attachment between the foster parent and children in our care.

Sibling placements

Some carers are able to care for sibling groups to enable children to stay together. It is important to Sparks Fostering that we are able to keep siblings together whenever possible because the children have already lost so much, that we must try to support them to hold on to any long-term relationships that may benefit them. Foster homes that care for siblings have the space, time and energy to meet the needs of all the children cared for.

Parent and child placements

Parent and child placements are required for parents who are struggling to care for their children. Foster carers can assist local authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to the parent’s ability to safely care for their child. Parent and child foster parents are expected to support the parent in care to improve their parenting skills, with the ideal outcome being that the parent in care develops the skills and confidence to care for their child independently.

Remand placements

Remand placements are needed when a child is waiting for a court date, and the courts have requested the local authority to provide a suitable home environment for the child to stay in. Remand foster carers offer a high level of supervision, strong and appropriate boundary setting and they are available to attend regular meetings and discussions. Children who are placed on remand are expected to be on their best behaviour because if the remand placement failed, they would most likely have to spend their remand time custody.

Placements for children with complex needs

Carers who are willing and able to do so provide placements for children who are at risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking, and/or display harmful sexualised behaviours, or have other complex needs. Sparks Fostering offers enhanced training and supervision for foster carers of children with complex needs.

Solo placements

Carers who are willing and able to do so provide solo placements to children who could be a risk to other children and young people, or whose behaviour is so challenging that carers cannot offer enough support if other children are present. Some children need to be provided the support of ‘solo placements’ because the child may struggle in the company of other children and have high therapeutic needs.

Placements for children with disabilities

Sparks Fostering aims to deliver a range of services for children with disabilities, including long term, short term, short break schemes and emergency placements. Sparks Fostering teams identify carers with the skills and experience to meet this particular need and offer additional training where necessary.

Unaccompanied children

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (also known as ‘separated children’) need the support of foster carers who know (or are willing to learn) about the asylum application process and can meet the identity needs of children of various ethnicities, cultures and for whom English isn’t a first language. Many unaccompanied children need specific support in their recovery from intense war (or other) trauma.

Respite placements

Respite placements usually only last a few days or a couple of weeks and they give permanent carers a short break from caring.

Staying Put

Staying Put arrangements allow young people to remain in their foster placement post 18 to support their transition into adulthood. For children who continue with further education, they may be able to remain in the fostering home until age 25. Sparks Fostering encourages foster carers to have long standing relationships with children in our care whenever possible.

6. Closing assessments and termination of approval.

Resignation

Foster carers can give 28 days’ notice of resignation from fostering. The resignation becomes automatic 28 days after written notice is received by the agency.

Termination of assessment or deregistration

Fostering assessments may be closed before approval because a returned stage 1 check was

unsatisfactory, or during stage 2 because the assessor and manager believed that the applicant/s wouldn't be suitable for fostering. Approved foster carers may also be deregistered following concerns by the agency. Stage 2 assessment closures and de-registrations would be presented to panel and then considered by the Agency Decision Maker.
Applicants (who were refused at stage 2) and foster carers (who have been deregistered) who disagree with the decision can appeal to The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Information about the IRM can be found here.

Staff support, supervision and planning.

Supervision

All members of staff at Sparks Fostering receive regular supervision from their line manager. Line managers audit staff, foster carer and children's files.

Training

All Sparks Fostering staff are expected to complete mandatory training and also supplement their training with additional training to meet the specific needs of children in our care and/or to further their own development.

Staff meetings

All staff members are invited to regular staff meetings.

Manager reviews and audits

The Registered Manager provides quarterly updates to other senior managers. The Registered Manager also submits an annual management report to Ofsted.

Equality and diversity in Fostering

Sparks Fostering is totally committed to the principles of equal opportunity in employment and services. No individual, employee, foster carer or child, will be disadvantaged as a consequence of their race, gender, disability, sexuality or any other reason. Discriminatory behaviour of any sort will be challenged and dealt with appropriately, which may include disciplinary action.

Our service provision to Local Authorities, foster carers, looked after children and young people reflects this culture of diversity, ensuring that our services, recruitment and general business do not discriminate on any grounds.



Allegations, complaints and standards of care

The Sparks Fostering complaints/allegations/whistleblowing procedure is available here.

Foster parent/s provide support to children to help them to understand the Children's Guide when needed.

All foster parents, staff and placing local authorities are asked to read the agency 'Allegations, Complaints and Standards of Care Policy' during their induction training with Sparks Fostering.

All feedback from children, foster carers and staff is discussed at management meetings and plans are put in place to respond to the feedback, with a view to improving the service offered by Sparks Fostering.



Ofsted

Sparks Fostering is registered with Ofsted. The registration certificate can be viewed here.

Inspection reports are available to view here on the Ofsted website and Ofsted may be contacted at:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
- enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- 0300 123 1231

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