

# Soundly Fostering



## Statement of Purpose 2024

### Address:

Soundly Fostering Ltd, Charles Burrell Centre, Staniforth Rd, Thetford, IP24 3LH

### Registered Office:

The Gables, Old Market St, Thetford, IP24 2EN

Registered Manager: Katharina Carter (BA SW)

Responsible Individual/Service Manager: Joy O'Brien-Miller (Dip SW)

Soundly Fostering Ltd Company registration:13523413

Ofsted registration: 2665004

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WE

### Introduction

Soundly Fostering is an Independent Fostering agency, established in July 2021 by Joy O'Brien-Miller and Katharina Carter, both professionally qualified social workers with more than 30 years of collective experience of working with children and young people. Both are committed to improving children's outcomes and to working soundly, by honouring our ethos of open communication and therapeutic collaboration.

We have specifically chosen to facilitate this, by creating a small and bespoke fostering agency, with the capacity to nurture and look after children, families and staff equally.

Our vision is for children and young people living with fostering families, to experience tangible opportunities and ways of developing to their full potential, in the sound knowledge that those around them will encourage and support their aspirations, identity and family connections.

Joy and Kat agree that understanding and knowing every individual and family in the organisation personally, is an important part of creating a positive work and home environment, which recognises and celebrates everyone's abilities.

They are both be actively involved in Soundly Fostering's day-to-day running. Joy as service manager and responsible individual and Kat as the agency registered manager. Located in Thetford and covering the four counties of Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and

Suffolk and beyond, we aim to assess, and support fostering families and strive to provide a service in which our families, children and staff feel fully respected and valued.

### Mission statement

To provide our fostering families with a sound and secure base, building on their strengths and abilities, through training and support. To assist and equip them in providing therapeutically nurturing, safe and loving homes for children and young people, who for whatever reason, are unable to live with their birth families.

Through relationship and strengths-based working, we will build on resilience and confidence in achieving, as well as providing, home environments. Our aim being that these will remain available for as long as they are needed by children and young people. Working as part of the whole family system, we will ensure that each child/young person is fully supported. We will recognise the strengths and the individuality of our staff team, every fostering family and of the children who come and live with them, to build their resilience, create safety and realise their unique potential.

### National Legislative and policy framework

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

These regulations require fostering agencies to produce a Statement of Purpose which provides a useful source of information to staff, foster carers, prospective foster carers, children and young people who are placed with Soundly Fostering Ltd, their parents, significant others and colleagues from partner Agencies/Local Authorities.

Soundly Fostering aims to meet and exceed the requirements arising from:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children & Young Persons Act 2008
- Soundly Fostering's– Policies and Good Practice Guidance

Soundly Fostering will provide a copy of the Statement of Purpose to OFSTED and on request will make a copy of it available to:

- any person working on behalf of Soundly Fostering
- any foster carer or prospective foster carer of Soundly Fostering
- any child (subject to their age and level of understanding) placed with a foster carer
- the parent/person with parental responsibility for a child or young person placed with Soundly Fostering

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed regularly and at least annually by the management of Soundly Fostering and updated versions are then provided to carers, staff, Ofsted, young people placed within Soundly Fostering and accessible on the website: [www.soundlyfostering.co.uk](http://www.soundlyfostering.co.uk) for parents and family members, colleagues from other social care agencies, and the general public also.

## Ethos and Principles



### Aims and Objectives

Everyone has the inherent right to develop their potential, regardless of previous life experiences. Soundly Fostering believes that a family placement is appropriate for most children in care. We aim to provide family placements that afford the same love, encouragement, and stability any caring family offers a child. Soundly Fostering will strive to deliver long-term stability through therapeutic fostering. Children and young people have a right to be looked after by adults who offer them respect, affection and are concerned for their wellbeing. Children will be supported and encouraged to maintain links and contact with their families and community of origin and our foster carers will support these efforts.

Our foster carers will encourage children to be proud of their background and will be supported to fulfil their potential, celebrating their talents and achievements into adulthood. Children will be consulted, involved, and listened to with appropriate consideration given to their views concerning important decisions affecting their lives, including development of the agency. When it is considered not to be in the child or young person's best interest to act upon their wishes, they will be helped to understand why this is so.

Children should be safeguarded in care, be protected from harm, including actions by other children or young people themselves. Soundly Fostering and foster carers will operate within the practice and policies agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Young people should be suitably prepared for leaving care. They should leave Soundly Fostering with savings, educational attainment to support their chosen career and suitable independent skills.

We value the opinions and voices of the children in our care and ensure that they feel listened to and that they assist us in making developmental changes within the organisation, to make Soundly Fostering an excellent and outstanding service.

We will ensure our high expectations and standards of care are met by:

- Positively promoting family contacts, friendships, and community contacts.

- Taking an anti-discriminatory approach when considering and providing for individual needs, including gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture, etc.
- Demonstrating an on-going commitment to promoting and safeguarding each child/young person's emotional and physical well-being and protecting them from all forms of abuse.
- Listening to the views and feelings of each child/young person and ensuring he she or they, are involved in the decisions being made about them – providing access to advocacy services where appropriate.
- Each child/young person being provided with appropriate health care and an opportunity to participate in any decisions about their health.
- Each child/young person having full access to educational resources, promoting achievement and independence.
- Each child/young person having appropriate support in preparing them for long-term fostering or adoption or developing their skills for independent living.
- Ongoing assistance being made available where possible, as agreed by the Local Authority, to children and their families in the event they return to their care.
- The promotion of a sound and therapeutic approach, underpinning the service.
- By recruiting and selecting those individuals and families, who have a desire to engage in holistic, attachment and trauma-informed fostering.
- By providing therapeutic support, supervision and training for foster carers and staff.
- Ensuring that foster carers who are approved by our agency, have agreed to work in partnership with Soundly Fostering, with their approval status being reviewed annually.
- By the ongoing expectations that carers safeguard and are committed to the well-being of children.
- Working collaboratively with the child/young person, their families, local authorities, and other agencies.
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Soundly Fostering will further work to achieve our Goals by:

- Building and maintaining a core team of qualified and committed staff, who can support children and fostering families.
- Ensuring that our work is underpinned by the most recent research.
- Accessing external expertise and resources as required to support children's trauma recovery and meet their developmental needs.
- Ensuring that foster carers have easily accessible professional support and that they are known as individuals and their family dynamics are understood.
- Supporting foster carers unique skills and abilities and enabling an environment of reflection and therapeutic learning.
- Providing opportunities for children to express their views and feelings and ensure this is monitored and acted upon.
- Continually developing the service in collaboration with our fostering families, our young people and commissioning authorities to improve outcomes.
- Challenging discriminatory practice and all forms of racism.
- Respecting foster carers as professionals and acknowledging the additional resilience required to work in their home setting.
- Helping families to sustain a balance, by supporting with respite and support work, when needed.
- Commitment to professional development, both for staff and foster carers.
- Recognising that to care for and support fostering families, staff require a healthy work/life balance.
- Continually maintaining and reviewing policies and procedures to comply with legislative and statutory requirements of good practice

## Types of fostering



Soundly Fostering provides placements for children and young people of all ages up to 18 years. This includes individuals and sibling groups.

### Emergency Fostering

Some carers can accept unplanned placements, where the carer's tasks would be to provide a place of safety and meet the immediate needs of the child. Soundly Fostering operates a system of 24-hour support for fostering families.

### Short term fostering

Carers can provide a home, for a shorter time, while social workers and courts determine how best to support a child or young person, by providing foster carers who understand the uncertainty experienced by children and their families during the assessment and court process and who can facilitate increased and regular family contact.

### Bridging and respite fostering

Soundly Fostering will recruit carers who will work with children and birth families towards preparing for adoption, long-term fostering, future placements or work to plans aimed at supporting Children in Care, into independence.

### Fostering Siblings

Soundly Fostering is committed to ensuring that where possible, siblings can live together. We can offer sibling group placements, aiming to have carers who are able to take larger sibling groups, to ensure that children do not need to be separated for practical reasons. Where this is not possible, Soundly Fostering will strive to ensure that children from sibling groups are placed as close as possible geographically to be able to spend sibling time and contact.

## Fostering Children with a Disability

Foster carers will be assessed for their suitability and skills to care for a child with a disability. Appropriate training will be provided for carers to enable them to meet the needs of each child and understand the additional safeguarding required to keep children and young people living with disability. The knowledge of specialist professionals will be sought to support carers to fulfil this role.

## Long term- matched fostering

Soundly Fostering provides carers who are approved to offer long-term homes and wherever possible, will assist Local Authorities in finding and/or assessing long-term foster carers for a specific known child.

If an existing short-term placement is likely to be agreed as a long-term placement, the agency will undertake to consider how the carers will meet the long-term needs of the child and will participate in the formation of a permanency report, which will be presented to the Local Authority permanency panel.

## Teenagers and preparation for independence

Soundly Fostering has a commitment to improve outcomes for care leavers. All the good work carried out by foster parents can be undermined if effective plans are not made for moving a child or young person on to independence. Our foster carers are guided, trained, and supported to help young people make the transition to independence. We aim to work creatively with Local Authorities, children, young people and foster carers to ease the transition to independence. The Pathway Plans developed by the placing Local Authority would provide a formal structure for this work. Staying Put arrangements will be planned for and encouraged when appropriate.

## Parent and Child Fostering

Soundly Fostering can provide foster carers who are equipped to provide short or long-term placements for parent and child, regardless of the age of the parent. These carers are trained to contribute skilled observations towards Parenting Assessments.

As an agency, we will ensure that our Parent and Child Fostering service, complies with all the regulatory requirements and standards and is responsible for the management and monitoring of all standards.

All foster carers and staff, as well as those associated with the agency, will have access to the Soundly Fostering Safeguarding Procedure, as well as the skills and knowledge to make safeguarding referrals when appropriate.

## Support for Foster carers

Soundly Fostering respects and values the work foster carers do and recognises that foster carers have personal expertise and make the biggest difference in the everyday lives of children and young people in care. Consequently, we provide a bespoke service to support each family to further support children/young people and their foster carers. The process of identifying and arranging the necessary level of support starts when a child/young person and foster family are 'matched' at the placement planning stage and is adjusted and monitored through open communication and continued assessment of need.

Soundly fostering offers the following support to all our foster carers:

- Access to Soundly Fostering support services 24-hours a day, all year round.
- Supervision and support from dedicated, qualified and suitably experienced staff
- Soundly Fostering supervising social worker
- Frequent visits and regular telephone contact from the Agency
- Respite arrangements
- Support from an independent training and education advisor
- Family Support workers to work with children and young people
- TDS training
- A level of financial support that values the skills of foster carer(s), making additional payments for Birthday's, celebrations and holidays
- Each fostering family will have their own support networks. The identified people will be "enhanced" DBS checked and interviewed by the agency to ensure they are clear of their roles and responsibilities when caring for children in the absence of the foster carer.
- Dedicated Foster Carer Support Groups
- Access to clinical supervision, as necessary
- Bespoke training package

Children and young people referred to the agency may have experienced many rejections and Soundly Fostering attempts to minimise this happening again. Foster carers joining Soundly Fostering, will be supported for their resilience in building sound relationships with children and offering nurturing and loving homes. It is for these reasons that we recognise the value of good, high quality, relevant and responsive support.



## Recruitment of foster carers



At Soundly Fostering we have an ongoing programme of recruitment, using word of mouth, the internet and local advertisement. Enquiries and applications to foster with us are always welcomed, both from those considering fostering for the first time and those transferring from other agencies.

We aim to recruit foster carers who share our ethos of open communication, who are committed to Safeguarding and welcoming children and young people into their families, whilst working therapeutically and professionally with the team around each child.

Applications to foster will be considered regardless of gender, marital status, sexuality, race, disability, religion and culture or employment status. Our assessment and approval process fully complies with the Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations. Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013

### Review of Approval

All foster carers will be presented to panel within 3 months of their first annual review. They will continue to be reviewed annually, returning to panel, every 3<sup>rd</sup> Year. Approval may be reviewed sooner, or at panel, if their approval needs to be reviewed due to foster carer's medical concerns, concerns about foster carer's practice, serious breaches of the foster carers agreement, allegations, resignations, or significant changes in the household composition.

### Learning and development

Soundly Fostering considers training and support to be essential for all staff and foster carers, equipping them with a sound knowledge base and strategies for practically offering attuned and therapeutic home environments, as well as life chances for children and young people who are fostered with us. We provide statutory and mandatory training packages for all, as well as identifying individual and tailored training for staff, foster carers and for



children. Carers will be supported to complete their Training Support and Development Standards portfolio within the legislated timescales.

## Compliments and Complaints

We aim always to provide a service with integrity and care. At Soundly Fostering, we view complaints, comments and compliments as an opportunity to improve our services. Your feedback will form vital information to inform the future policy and planning of our service. We would like to work in partnership with everyone we work with, in the development of Soundly Fostering's service. We are committed to resolving any worries or concerns and to finding positive outcomes.

Soundly Fostering has a clear complaints procedure, which is made available to staff, foster carers, young people and all stakeholders.



All complaints will be thoroughly and swiftly addressed.

## Allegations

In all cases when there are concerns regarding abuse or neglect, the Local Authority Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership procedures will be followed. The alleged staff member, or foster carer, will be informed of the substance of an allegation as soon as possible, following the advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

There may be instances when the information cannot be shared fully, so as not to compromise the investigation. Investigation will take place by an independent social worker and/or the police, if deemed necessary.

When a foster carer has had an allegation made against them, they will be referred to the fostering panel for a review. The Registered Manager will confirm in writing to the foster carer, the recommendation that will be made to panel, along with a copy of the report. Foster carers will be invited to attend the panel meeting.

Foster carers undergoing investigation are strongly advised to access independent advice and support from the Fostering Network. Independent support through supervision should continue, as will the support provided to the foster carer's birth children, regardless of whether the allegation has been made against them. Support offered will include helping foster carers to understand the process, ensuring that they are given all appropriate information and assisting them in their communication with other agencies. In cases when

a serious allegation is substantiated, due consideration will be given to whether this should be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

## Staff Recruitment



We aim to ensure that we have sufficient staff in place to deliver the service to the standards set out in this document. To this end, Soundly Fostering will limit our supervising social workers caseloads, and carefully monitor all eventualities to safeguard our provision and promise to provide the best bespoke support possible.

Robust, safer recruitment procedures are undertaken for every member of staff where their experience, skills and suitability for each post will be assessed.

Appropriate DBS checks are carried out for all members of staff, without exception.

Soundly Fostering will commit to relevant post-qualifying training for social workers, to ensure they are kept abreast of all current trends, legislation, and regulations.

Annual appraisals are undertaken to identify gaps in knowledge or skill base, to ensure appropriate training is given at all levels. Their training is in line with continuous professional development requirements including their continued registration as a social worker through Social Work England.

Quality supervision with all members of staff is provided on a regular basis to ensure that all staff feel safe and are suitably equipped in the knowledge of their roles.

Our staff team will play a crucial role with the delivery of the bespoke service we are committed to offering our children and families and they will equally be afforded the support and respect required to feel valued. Soundly fostering will aim to assist all team members to achieve a good work/life balance.

## Company Structure



### **Joy O’Brien-Miller – Responsible Individual /Director/Operations Manager**

Joy has worked with children for throughout her social work career, either in a residential setting, child protection or fostering. While in the residential sector, she completed her Dip.SW and a Diploma in Therapeutic Child Care. She has worked in the independent fostering sector since 2007, holding various roles, including that of senior supervising social worker. Most recently, Joy was the registered manager for a small fostering agency.

As a child, her parents were also foster parents, so she grew up in a fostering household, which has afforded her good insight into the challenges of being part of a fostering household. Joy intends to work with the Soundly Fostering team to ensure that children placed with us are safe, happy and well cared for, embracing therapeutic models to support children in their journey.

### **Katharina Carter – Registered Manager/Director.**

Kat started her working life, in a family setting with children and adults living with disabilities and different needs, later developing her interest in therapeutic work as a physical therapist, followed by roles in older residential settings as activities coordinator and in children’s nurseries, as an early year’s practitioner. Through her work, Kat became aware of the importance of safeguarding in all settings, as well as getting to know and value people for their unique qualities, facilitating and supporting self-efficacy and supporting family connections for children and families across their life course.

Over the last 13 years, Kat has worked with children and families, both in Local Authority and in the private sector. As a social worker, she has focused on the relational and therapeutic work of supporting children, their families and the professional teams involved in corporate parenting.

Kat has held social work roles in child protection, children in care, leaving care and fostering teams. Most recently, she worked as a senior supervising social worker in a small independent fostering agency. She has a solid understanding of the work fostering families commit to, the importance of respectful teamwork and open communication between the agency, fostering staff, Local Authority, and children in care.

Kat is committed to providing a dedicated and bespoke fostering service.

### **Gemma Boreham - Senior Supervising Social Worker**

Gemma has been a social worker for 16 years. She has worked for Local Authorities in child protection, assessment, leaving care and family group conferencing teams. Gemma is practice educator trained and has supported social work students on their journey to becoming social workers.

Most recently, she worked for an independent fostering agency as a supervising social worker. Gemma brings a wealth of experience to her senior role with Soundly Fostering. In addition to supervising and supporting foster carers, she will be involved in overseeing staff and the ongoing development of co-producing our service, together with children and fostering families. Gemma will facilitate support groups with foster carers and will continue to be involved with child and family participation for the agency.

### **Åsa Seljestad-Payne - Administrator and Child Engagement Coordinator**

Asa is an experienced fostering administrator and child participation coordinator. She is passionate about promoting equality, opportunity and good outcomes for young people, by listening to them and valuing their input. In previous roles Åsa has helped to organise events, set up a Young Persons Forum and organised activities for young people and birth children. She is excited to be able to support our fostering families and is always available to help and speak to them individually.

### **Independent Social Workers**

Soundly Fostering currently has 4 independent social workers able to complete fostering assessments for prospective foster carers.

### **Clare Aston - Agency Decision Maker**

Clare has been qualified as a social worker for nearly 30 years and for most of that time she has worked with foster carers, as supervising social worker, placements officer and then manager for an independent fostering agency. Clare has been an Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for over 100 fostering families, for the past 3 years.

As Soundly's ADM, Clare will consider all the reports about prospective foster families presented to panel, along with the panel minutes, and decide if a family should foster or not and will review the approval of all Soundly foster carers on a yearly basis.

She is passionate about the quality assurance process, ensuring the agency maintains its high standards and the effectiveness of panel.

## Panel



### **Fasil Bhatti - Panel Chair**

Fasil chairs Soundly Fostering's panel. He is extremely experienced, having been sitting on fostering panels since 2013, both for Local Authorities and independent providers.

### **Mary-Ann Hodd - Panel Vice-Chair**

Mary-Ann is care experienced, she sits on several panels and works as a trainer and advocate, positively helping change the narrative for children in care.

### **Panel Members**

Soundly Fostering holds a central list, comprising of 13 independent panel members, all of whom bring different perspectives informed by their backgrounds and professions and training undertaken in respect of the panel role.

### **Panel Advisor**

Joy is our agency panel advisor. Medical and legal advice will be sought separately.

### **Panel Administrator**

Phil has worked in various roles across health, therapeutic services, training and development in mental health and safeguarding. Most recently, he has returned to primary school teaching. As panel administrator, he works alongside Asa and ensures that panel proceedings are accurately captured.