



# **Statement of Purpose**

**March 2022**

**Southern Counties  
SC485748**

## CONTENTS






Section 1	Introduction	Page 3
Section 2	Equality and Diversity	Page 3
Section 3	Aims and Objectives	Page 4
Section 4	Status and Constitution	Page 5
Section 5	Company Meetings	Page 5
Section 6	Management Structure	Page 6
Section 7	Team Structure	Page 8
Section 8	Standards of Care and Mission Statement	Page 10
Section 9	Service Provision	Page 11
Section 10	Behaviour – Understanding and Support	Page 13
Section 11	Recruitment Assessment and Approval	Page 14
Section 12	Training and Development	Page 19
Section 13	Supporting Foster Carers to Care for Children	Page 20
Section 14	Supporting Children and Young People	Page 22
Section 15	Statistical Information	Page 23
Section 16	Outcomes	Page 24
Section 17	Quality Assurance	Page 24
Section 18	Complaints and Compliments	Page 25
Section 19	Contact Details	Page 31

## Section 1 Introduction







This document sets out the Statement of Purpose of Orange Grove Foster Care.

It relates to the operations of Orange Grove Foster Care as a national Independent Fostering Provider and specifically to the Southern Counties Office.

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate statute law and regulations, including:

-  Care Standards Act 2000
-  Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011
-  Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
-  The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 : Fostering Services
-  The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

Orange Grove Foster Care's Statement of Purpose provides a range of information, which is intended for a wide audience including:

-  Orange Grove Foster Care Staff
-  Foster Carers and Prospective Foster Carers
-  Children and young people who are placed with Orange Grove Foster Care
-  Local Authorities who place or are considering placing children and young people with Orange Grove Foster Carers
-  Colleagues from other Social Care Agencies
-  The General Public.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated frequently by the Management Team and Registered Managers in respect of local information.

## Section 2 Equality and Diversity

Orange Grove Foster Care is committed to equality of opportunity and encourages applicants from all sectors of the community.

Our vision places equality at the heart of our approach to policy making, service delivery and employment. We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment.

## Section 3 Aims and Objectives

### 3.1 Aims

Orange Grove Foster Care is a leading national Independent Fostering Service Provider. We are recognised as a first choice provider of excellent family placements. We share a set of common principles, which guide our work with children and young people and their Foster Carers. Our success is based on our commitment to providing extensive support to carers and the value we place upon working in partnership.

We aim to achieve respect for and promotion of the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children and young people, having consideration to gender, sexuality and any disability of fostered children and young people, when making placement decisions.

### 3.2 Objectives

- 🌱 To provide a responsive, supportive and professional 24 hour service for Foster Carers, children / young people and local authorities.
- 🌱 To deliver foster care placements that ensure young people, who are looked after by local authorities, receive a stable and consistent experience of safe, warm and caring family life with skilled and trained foster carers.
- 🌱 To ensure that high quality care, in a family setting, is provided for children and young people, through supportive foster homes where the needs of every child is central.
- 🌱 To deliver foster care placements that promote a child centred approach and encourage every child to maximise their potential.
- 🌱 To ensure that the child's welfare is paramount in all our decisions.
- 🌱 To provide an extensive support service to our carers in the knowledge that this has a direct bearing on successful placement outcomes.
- 🌱 To ensure careful matching of a child's needs and wishes with the skills, experience and qualities of our foster carers.
- 🌱 To recruit and retain Foster Carers from diverse backgrounds and thereby ensuring a choice of appropriate placement options for children and young people.
- 🌱 To ensure that cultural and diversity needs of every child and young person placed with our Foster Carers are met.
- 🌱 To promote the educational achievements of young people and thereby enabling them to benefit from a range of educational opportunities.
- 🌱 To enable young people to pursue interests and hobbies and participate in a range of activities.
- 🌱 To promote a healthy lifestyle.
- 🌱 To ensure that every child's emotional and physical health needs are met.
- 🌱 To promote contact, as appropriate, with birth family and significant others, for every fostered child and young person, during their foster placement.
- 🌱 To provide an inclusive partnership approach which embraces children and young people, their families, Foster Carers and local authorities.
- 🌱 To provide a commitment to the ongoing learning, training and professional developments of Foster Carers and staff.
- 🌱 To ensure Foster Carers undertaking parent and child placements receive relevant training and understand the specific needs, requirements and specialism of these placements.
- 🌱 To provide a training programme for Foster Carers.
- 🌱 To constantly deliver best value and pursue continual improvement in all areas.

## Section 4 Status and Constitution

Orange Grove Foster Care is an Independent Fostering Provider established in 1996, since which time it has grown organically to be a successful and leading national provider of high quality fostering services, for children and young people through supportive foster placements where the needs of every child is central.

In 2009 Orange Grove Foster Care was purchased by Hillcrest Care Ltd. In 2013 share ownership of Hillcrest was reorganised to Sovereign Capital. In June 2014 Orange Grove became 2 regions, north and south and offices were merged to create 8 registered offices, 4 offices in the north region and 4 offices in the south region. As from 8 July 2014 following a demerger of Orange Grove from Hillcrest and an integration into Partnership in Children's Services, (PiCS) all offices became registered under Orange Grove Foster Care Limited, which is a limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985, (company registration number 07027421). In July 2017 Orange Grove appointed a new Director whilst maintaining Central Services under the PiCS umbrella. In 2019 Orange Grove, as an agency within PiCS, integrated with Core Assets and in July 2020 announced the former PiCS and Core Assets new Group name as Polaris.

Orange Grove Foster Care currently has 6 registered offices and is Registered and Inspected as a Fostering Provider under the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Standards Regulations 2011 and is therefore properly constituted to provide foster care placements for children and young people 'Looked After' on behalf of Local Authorities.

## Section 5 Company Meetings

Senior Management meetings and separate Board meetings take place regularly. These meetings are attended by relevant senior staff who are responsible for the corporate governance of the company, as well as determining and reviewing the company's:

- 🌱 Annual Business Plan.
- 🌱 Legal Compliance.
- 🌱 Strategic vision, direction and goals.
- 🌱 Culture, values, vision and mission.
- 🌱 Financial expenditure, management and performance.
- 🌱 Organisational structure and capacity to implement strategic direction.
- 🌱 Policies and Procedures.
- 🌱 Quality Assurance.

Orange Grove Foster Care also hold monthly Manager meetings between Senior Managers, Registered Managers and relevant support staff, to monitor service and performance, address and coordinate the implementation of service developments, business and strategic issues and to benchmark best practice.

## Section 6 Management Structure

The Management Team have considerable experience in social work, management, practice and development roles and consist of:

Jo August, Group Chief Executive Officer and Responsible Individual  
Tracy Livesey, Managing Director  
Peter Battram, Agency Decision Maker  
Heather Sheridan, Operational Lead

Craig Clark, Registered Manager, Yorkshire Office  
Heather Sheridan, Registered Manager, Northwest Office  
Rajvir Barker, Team Manager, Staffordshire Office **Registered Manager application in process**  
Erica Eversfield, Registered Manager, Three Shires Office,  
Claudia Macovei, Team Manager, London and Essex Office **Registered Manager application in process**  
James McGarrigle, Registered Manager, Southern Counties Office

The Managing Director and the Operational Lead of Orange Grove provide support to the Registered Managers who are based in and manage the local registered Orange Grove offices.

All Orange Grove registered offices are supported by:

Human Resources Team  
Learning and Development Team  
Recruitment Team  
Marketing Team  
Carer Recruitment Team  
Commercial Team  
Placement Team  
Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Manager  
Quality Assurance and Panel Manager  
IT support

The organisation chart below outlines the Management Team and organisational structure:

Responsible Individual  
Jo August



Managing Director  
Tracy Livesey



Peter Battram  
Agency Decision Maker



Operational Lead  
Heather Sheridan



Polaris Central Services  
Human Resources  
Learning and Development  
Recruitment and Marketing  
Carer Recruitment  
Commercial  
Placements

QA, Panel & Safeguarding

Orange Grove Registrations

Claudine Irankunda  
QA & Safeguarding Manager

Clare Wilcox  
QA & Panel Manager

Yorkshire  
Craig Clark  
Registered Manager

Northwest  
Heather Sheridan  
Registered Manager

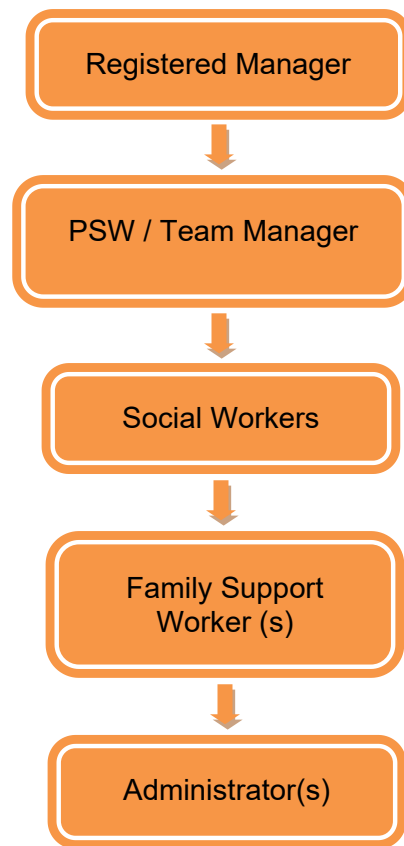
Staffordshire  
Rajvir Barker  
Team Manager

Three Shires  
Erica Eversfield  
Registered Manager

London & Essex  
Claudia Macovei  
Team Manager

Southern Counties  
James McGarrigle  
Registered Manager

## Section 7 Team Structure



Orange Grove staff have the following roles:

**Managing Director** – To strategically support the company and registrations and offer legal advice.

**Operational Lead** – To provide advice and line management support to the Orange Grove Registered Managers and quality assurance staff.

**Registered Manager** – Responsible for overseeing compliance with the National Minimum Standards, Fostering Regulations and other relevant legal obligations as well as internal policies for their registration, supported by centralised services. They have day to day operational management responsibilities for their registered office. They are designated managers for child protection as well as the LADO contact.

**Principal Social Worker / Team Managers** – Provide day to day operational support to the Registered Manager for service delivery within defined geographical areas. They are supervised and supported by their Registered Manager and have access to centralised services.

**Family Support Workers** - Undertake outreach work and support to Foster Carers in their day to day task of looking after the children and young people in their area, on behalf of the Agency.



They also coordinate activities and undertake age appropriate consultation with children and young people who are looked after and birth children. In addition, they help to support children looked after into independence.

**Social Workers** - Orange Grove Foster Care has recruited qualified and experienced social work staff who are registered individually with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They are responsible for supporting, advising and monitoring our Foster Carers, visiting carer households regularly, attending meetings, spending time with children and young people in placement as appropriate and making recommendations to the Foster Carer's review.

**Administrators** – Provide vital administrative day to day support to their Team by ensuring good communication, facilities, recording, IT and general administrative support.

In addition to permanent staff, Orange Grove Foster Care has a pool of staff who work on an independent, self-employed basis across a variety of roles in the company, e.g. Independent Form F Assessors, Sessional Social Workers offering placement support, Independent Investigators for formal complaints, Therapeutic Support, Child Helpline Co-ordinator, Medical Advisers and an Education Coordinator who provides advice, support and guidance on educational issues for children looked after.

All Orange Grove Foster Care Therapists hold appropriate qualifications and membership of a nationally recognised organisation relevant to their work. They have extensive experience in understanding the emotional needs of children and young people, especially those in Care.

For all self-employed staff verification of formal qualifications is assured and Orange Grove Foster Care carries out the required checks and enquiries, comparable to those of permanent staff, to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is safeguarded and promoted.









All staff who undertake work for Orange Grove Foster Care have contracts of employment and job descriptions or contractual briefs.

## Section 8 Standards of Care







### Mission Statement

**“To provide excellent family care for children and young people, enabling them to achieve their full potential in a stable and supportive foster home where best practice, quality and safe care is delivered.”**

At Orange Grove Foster Care, we believe that:

-  Each individual has an inherent right to develop their true potential, regardless of their previous life experiences.
-  Children and young people have a right to be looked after by adults who offer them positive support, respect, reassurance and affection.
-  All adults and professionals supporting the young person must respect the significance of their birth family, their race, culture and religion.
-  All children and young people have the right to achieve their best possible outcome.
-  Young people must be appropriately prepared for leaving Care. They should have savings, educational attainment to support their chosen career and suitable independence skills.
-  Orange Grove Foster Care will be managed in an ethical, effective and efficient manner.
-  All staff, Foster Carers and other adults who come into contact with the children fostered by Orange Grove Foster Care will be subject to appropriate checks and vetting procedures.
-  The Orange Grove way is to provide safe care in a stable and supportive foster home.

In addition, Orange Grove Foster Care will:

-  Strive to exceed the National Minimum Standards at all times.
-  Ensure that the rights of the children fostered with Orange Grove Foster Care are promoted in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
-  Ensure that child protection procedures are followed robustly at all times to ensure that young people placed with the agency are safeguarded.
-  Work in partnership with local authorities to identify the individual needs of the child placed and then to deliver the Care required.
-  Ensure that Foster Carers are trained in behavioural management and do not demean, degrade or humiliate a young person in their Care.
-  Ensure that equality and diversity is promoted at all times: through recruitment, assessment, matching and supporting the placement.

## **Section 9 Service Provision**






Orange Grove Foster Care works in partnership with placing local authorities to ensure the provision of a wide range of safe, secure and appropriate foster care placements for children and young people of all ages, with appropriately matched and approved Foster Carers who are able to meet the individual needs of the young person. All referrals are received through our dedicated Placement Team.

All placements are negotiated between the placing authority and the local office to ensure that the appropriate placement resources are offered to the placing authority in respect of the young person. This ensures that the young person is placed with Orange Grove Foster Carers who have experience / training in appropriate / specialised areas such as managing challenging behaviour, caring for those who have been sexually abused or parent and child placements.

### **9.1 Placement Regulations**

All placements of children and young people with Orange Grove Foster Carers are made and monitored in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

This means that:

-  All Foster Carers are appropriately approved, reviewed and have signed their Foster Carer Agreement.
-  Wherever possible, a pre-placement planning meeting is undertaken, including introductions between the Foster Carer and the child / young person.
-  Either before, or at the point of placement, essential professional information is shared including Care Plans, medical consent and clarity around delegation to the Foster Carer(s).
-  Prior to any placement being made a full risk assessment is undertaken by an Orange Grove Supervising Social Worker in conjunction with the local authority Social Worker and the Social Worker of any child already in placement.
-  In the event of an emergency placement, immediate placement planning receives priority.

### **9.2 Matching**

All Orange Grove Foster Care placements are carefully matched to ensure that the needs of the child / young person can be best met by the Foster Carers put forward and their level of skills and experience.

Once a referral is received, close communication takes place between the dedicated Orange Grove Placement Team, the registered office, local authority colleagues and our Foster Carers, to ensure that the child's needs will be fully met through the best possible match.

At Orange Grove Foster Care we take the decision to place a child extremely seriously and all decisions to place are overseen by the relevant Registered Manager to ensure that we make the best possible match for the child and Foster Carer.

Children and young people placed with Orange Grove Foster Care will never be expected to share a bedroom with another fostered child or child of the Foster Carers, other than if they are siblings and it is appropriate to do so.

### **9.3 Fostering Placements**

Orange Grove Foster Care offers the following range of placements for children and young people of all ages:

**Emergency Placement** - Placements are provided by Orange Grove Foster Carers at short notice should there be an unforeseen emergency placement required for a child / young person with no prior plan. Orange Grove Foster Care operates a 24-hour service and emergency placements can be identified and made out of usual working hours.

**Respite** - Providing Foster Care and as a break for parents / carers and as additional support where support networks are lacking.

**Short Term Placement** - Short term planned placements can be open ended where the long term plans for the child/young person's future has not yet been determined. Care is usually provided for a few days / months while plans are made for the child's long term future.

**Long Term Placement** - A placement that is planned (prior to placement commencing or subsequently) to provide permanent Care for a child / young person up to and into adult independence.

**Permanency** - Promoting and encouraging a permanent placement and home life.

**Sibling Group** - Sibling placements either placed together or separately. Orange Grove will be involved in facilitating contact between siblings as necessary and appropriate.

**Parent and Child Placement** - Placements are available for a parent and their child, where Foster Carers can provide support to a parent in developing their parenting skills. Additional training is provided for Foster Carers wishing to provide parent and child placements due to the specific nature of their role, and in working in partnership with other professionals.

**Teenagers** – Placements with Orange Grove Foster Carers who are experienced in meeting the needs of challenging teenagers.

**Solo Placement** - Orange Grove Foster Carers are available to care for children and young people whose needs are so complex requiring a higher level of support and supervision, which precludes the placement of any other child or young person being placed within the remaining vacancies within the foster home. If requested, and by arrangement with the placing authority, additional support services are made available to such placements.

**Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People** - Orange Grove Foster Care offers placements for children and young people who are deemed to be unaccompanied asylum seekers and where their residency status within the UK is yet to be determined. Orange Grove Foster Care is able to provide additional training for its Foster Carers to address support in immigration, religion, language and cultural needs and integration within the community and local faith groups.

**Staying Put Arrangements** - To facilitate a gradual transition for young people through to adulthood, similarly recognising that many young people in Care experience delayed maturity and that their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday may not be an appropriate point to leave their former foster carer.

## **Section 10 Behaviour – Understanding and Support**

Orange Grove Foster Carers recognise the often chaotic, traumatic and complex circumstances which have shaped the experiences of vulnerable children and young people. In supporting such children and young people to work through their past in preparation for a more positive future, it is often necessary to find pro-active approaches that encourage their expression through a broad range of behaviour.

Orange Grove Foster Care is committed to a holistic approach to behaviour, promoting a safe, secure and stable caring environment. Effective parenting, development, support and learning can only take place in an atmosphere that is purposeful and calm. It is a central aim to promote positive behaviour from everyone who works, lives and shares in the service offered. This will encourage everyone to interact with each other in a consistent and appropriate manner built on mutual respect and understanding.

Orange Grove Foster Care recognises that all behaviour is influenced by a number of factors. The way that children and young people behave depends on the way they feel about themselves. The way children and young people feel about themselves depends on their history and experiences, and the manner in which those around them respond to their behaviour.

We have found that positive approaches to behaviour management, through positive recognition and reward, coupled with clear and consistent systems and procedures for dealing with more challenging behaviour, are most effective.

We believe that this can best be achieved by creating and maintaining an environment which is consistent, fair and predictable and where positive relationships develop. Alongside an ethos, intrinsic to the organisation, that children and young people are supported and encouraged to demonstrate positive behaviour, there will be situations in which foster carers will be required to exercise reasonable control in order to prevent a high-risk escalation. In accordance with our duty of care, and the promotion of the best interests of young people, carers as part of the wider multi-disciplinary team are responsible for the safety of a young person. There may be occasions when it is necessary to intervene to safeguard the welfare of a young person, or when their behaviour places other children or adults at risk. In recognition of this Orange Grove deliver a mandatory behaviour management course, PRICE, which offers strategies and techniques for de-escalation.

In 2016 Orange Grove Foster Care introduced the Secure Base Model to all staff and foster carers which provides a positive framework through the five dimensions of therapeutic caregiving to help infants, children and young people to move towards greater security and to build resilience. Secure Base focuses on the interactions that occur between caregiver and children on a day to day, minute by minute basis in the home environment, and also considers how these relationships can enable the child to develop competence in the outside world of school, peer groups and the wider community.

We recognise the significant role that foster families play in supporting emotional and behavioural needs, which is often a highly challenging and complex process. Orange Grove Foster Care has developed specific support systems in this area, including access to professionals, specialised support staff, behavioural consultancy services, and assessment and risk assessment tools.

## **Section 11 Recruitment, Assessment, Approval and Review**

### **11.1 Recruitment**

In terms of outcomes for children in Care, who we recruit as Foster Carers is at least as important as the training, support and supervision we provide to Foster Carers once they are approved. This makes the recruitment and assessment processes crucial to Orange Grove Foster Care. Prospective Foster Carers have the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and young people have the right to assume that Orange Grove Foster Care is committed to the recruitment and approval of carers who are able to provide a high standard of Care.

Orange Grove continuously review management information relating to referrals of children and revises its recruitment strategy to meet the needs of those referrals. The recruitment strategy will take account of the age, ethnicity, disability, location and other patterns of needs (e.g. asylum seeking children, parent and child placements) that emerge through this analysis. This strategy informs future recruitment activities.

**Initial Enquiry** - All prospective Foster Carers who make an enquiry are subject to rigorous assessment and vetting procedures. When there is an enquiry from a potential Foster Carer, the Agency undertakes telephone contact where information gathering is completed. If the enquirer meets the initial set of criteria an information pack is sent to them to provide details about the work of the Agency and the role of a Foster Carer.

**Telephone Discussion** - Telephone contact will be made with the prospective Foster Carer to book an initial visit.

**Initial Visits** - An initial visit takes place in the home of the prospective Foster Carer(s). The initial visit will be booked following the telephone call to the prospective Foster Carer. If the Initial Visit is successful and both parties wish to proceed, the relevant documentation is discussed and an application form is then completed.

**Application Paperwork** - The prospective Foster Carer(s) must complete an application form, giving detailed information about themselves and their family and consent to Orange Grove undertaking further checks and enquiries to determine their suitability to foster. These include:

- Enhanced DBS checks on all members of the household over 18 years. These involve disclosure of information about any criminal convictions or cautions and other information, which may be held by the Police or Government Agencies relevant to the protection of children.
- Enquiries to Social Services Departments and their Child Protection Registers.
- Enquiries to other Agencies where appropriate.

**Medical Check** - The applicant(s) is/are required to have a full medical assessment completed by their GP and the report is made available to our Agency Medical Adviser for comment about the applicant(s) health and any impact this may have on their fostering potential.

**References** - The applicant(s) is/are asked to identify three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. One of these must be a relative of the applicant. When applicants have had previous partners the agency requires their details as well: it is likely references will be sought from them, particularly when there are children from the relationship. References are also taken from past employers.

References are taken in confidence but may not remain so: there may be a need to disclose the contents of a reference if it forms the basis of an agency decision not to approve a prospective carer.

**Training** - All applicant(s) are invited to Skills to Foster Training covering the responsibilities of being a Foster Carer and working with Orange Grove. All prospective Foster Carers must attend this training.

## **11.2 Form F Assessment**

Following the Initial Visit an Assessor will be allocated to the prospective Foster Carers by the Registered Manager / PSW / Team Manager. The Assessor will be an experienced Social Worker (or student Social Worker who will be supervised by an experienced Social Worker) who is allocated to undertake a full competence based assessment. Once allocated the prospective Foster Carers will be assigned to Panel in approximately 16 weeks. The Form F Assessor will visit the applicant(s) home, approximately 8-10 times, to meet and collect information about all members of the household and the applicant(s) skills and experiences in relation to fostering. The information obtained forms the basis of an assessment report. Orange Grove uses the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F. During the assessment process prospective Foster Carers will be helped to compile a portfolio of written material evidencing relevant skills and experience.

Orange Grove Foster Care has a robust recruitment and assessment process and believes that prospective foster carers have the right to be treated fairly, openly and with respect.

**Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Assessment:** In accordance with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, which amended the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the process Orange Grove Foster Care follow for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two stages. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information required for Stage 1, as defined in Schedule 3 Part 1 of the 2013 Regulations, must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received.

If during Stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the IRM, nor to make representations to Orange Grove Foster Care.



However, if in Stage 2 a decision is made that the applicant is not suitable to foster then a brief report must be completed, the applicant advised and their comments sought within 10 working days.

After the 10 days, or following receipt of the applicants' comments, whichever is the sooner, Orange Grove Foster Care must send the report, any comments from the applicant and any other relevant information to the Fostering Panel.

The applicant may, within 28 days, seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to Orange Grove Foster Care.

Following the completion of an assessment, with the exception of private references, the completed Form F is shared with the prospective Foster Carers prior to being presented to the Orange Grove Foster Care Panel. The report should be signed by a Registered Manager, who confirms it distinguishes appropriately between fact and opinion, and complies with legislation and the expectation of robust evidence gathering and analysis outlined in the policy document.

When the Form F has been completed, the Registered Manager, PSW or Social Worker from the Team may visit the applicants to verify the assessment report and ensure the applicants feel they have had a satisfactory experience during the assessment process.

Before being submitted to Panel the completed Form F report must be accurate, complete and signed by the applicants, the Assessor and the Registered Manager. A report must only be signed when all parties are happy with its content.

All information obtained about prospective Foster Carers is held on file in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Data Protection Act 1998. Upon request some of this information can be viewed. References from external agencies and personal references, which are given in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and the relevant referee(s).

### **11.3 Fostering Panel and Approval**

The finalised assessment report is presented to Orange Grove Fostering Panel. There is an expectation that all prospective Foster Carers attend Panel with their Assessing Social Worker.

Fostering Panel consists of members with a variety of expertise and knowledge including education, health, foster carers and experience of being in Care. Orange Grove Foster Care implements clear written policies and procedures on the recruitment to the Central List of persons considered to be suitable members of a Fostering Panel.

Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of applicant(s) to be approved as Foster Carer(s) with Orange Grove Foster Care, and reasons for their recommendation. The final decision for approval is made by the appropriate Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who must take account of the Fostering Panel's recommendations before deciding whether or not to approve a person as a Foster Carer, and on what terms. Their decision must be made within seven working days of receipt of the Panel's recommendation via the minutes. The ADM should also record the reasons for their recommendation. Once the decision is made the prospective Foster Carer should be informed orally within two working days and confirmation sent in writing to them






within 5 working days.

If the Foster Carers are unhappy with the final decision they have a right to make representations.

## **Foster Carer Agreements and Undertaking**

A Foster Carer Agreement is completed following approval, covering a range of contractual information and undertakings, including:

-  To Care appropriately for children and young people in placement.
-  To inform Orange Grove of any significant changes to their household or details.
-  To follow the policies and procedures laid down by the Agency.

All Orange Grove Foster Carers have access to our Foster Carer Handbook and have a carer log-in to update their records on CHARMS.





### **11.4 Reviews of Foster Carers**

Orange Grove Foster Care has a detailed procedure in relation to conducting reviews of Foster Carers which complies with the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 and 2013, and focuses on the core competences a Foster Carer must demonstrate, in accordance with BAAF Form F.

The Foster Carer Review provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that the quality of Care provided meets the standards demanded by Orange Grove. To be effective, the review has to be based upon reliable evidence regarding the standard of Care that has been provided. The Foster Carer Review should be seen as a process, considering a fresh the Foster Carer's approval and any significant changes in the household and support network, rather than a one-off event or a rubber-stamping exercise. In this way, the Foster Carer Review is a key part of Orange Grove's approach to quality assurance.

The Foster Carer Review also provides an opportunity for the Foster Carer to provide feedback upon the quality of supervision and support they have received, and to reflect upon the learning and development needs of Foster Carers and their Personal Development Plan (PDP). Such information is analysed to develop the training strategy of the service as a whole.

Reviews take place by Orange Grove, in line with regulatory requirements of a Foster Carer (Regulation 28(2)). A first review must take place not more than a year after approval and subsequent reviews take place within twelve months of the previous review, and every twelve months thereafter. Orange Grove must be satisfied that the Foster Carers continue to meet the required Standards (as set out in Regulation 28 (4)) and as a result of this reviews may be held within the 12 month period, for the following reasons;

-  Following a serious complaint, allegation of abuse, or other matters of serious concern;
-  In response to significant change of circumstances, such as a carer's adult child returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.);
-  At the request of the Fostering Panel;
-  At the Foster Carer's request;

- Where the Foster Carer is taking on a new type of fostering (e.g. parent and child placements, or changing the age range they will be fostering) thus requiring a change in their terms of approval.

Prior to the Review consultation and feedback will be required from the following:

- The Foster Carer.
- Any child currently placed with the Foster Carer or having lived with them during the previous 12 months – subject to their age and understanding.
- Any placing local authority which has, within the preceding year placed a child with the Foster Carer.
- Birth children.
- All members of the fostering household.
- Birth parents of any fostered child, if appropriate.
- Any other enquiries will also be made to ensure that Orange Grove Foster Care obtain all relevant information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the Foster Carer and their household continue to be suitable.

The Supervising Social Worker prepares a report for the Review which must evaluate and weigh up the evidence gathered from formal supervisions undertaken during the period under review. A Foster Carer Review takes place to consider the evidence gathered from the consultation / feedback. This Review is attended by the Supervising Social Worker, Reviewing Officer and Foster Carers. The subsequent report completed by the Chair is considered by the ADM and, where appropriate, Fostering Panel.

If, having considered the Review, the Agency Decision Maker decides that approval should continue they will write to the Foster Carer(s) informing them of the decision and the terms of approval (Regulation 28 (6)). All first reviews are required by the regulations to be considered by the Fostering Panel.

## **Section 12 Training and Development**

At Orange Grove Foster Care we recognise the importance of supporting and developing our foster carers. Often rewarding, fostering can also be challenging and requires opportunities for reflection and learning. We believe that Foster Carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career.

The landscape of childcare is changing all the time and new thinking, research and practice developments are constantly becoming available. Our service is committed to reflect this in our training programme and ensure it becomes fluid and dynamic to capture these opportunities. This will ensure foster carers have the skills and knowledge they need, and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

Our core aims are to:-

- Offer continuous professional development through training events that are credible, relevant and that connect directly with the fostering task

- Include our Foster Carers in the development of our training, in forming a partnership that commissions events that reflect their needs, areas of interest and affords opportunities for sector recognised qualifications
- Keep our Foster Carers updated in relation to legislative and policy changes, new guidance and best practice developments
- Differentiate the training to reflect diversity, levels of ability, learning styles and experience
- Make training accessible and available in different forms including face to face, e-learning and additional reading
- Provide our Foster Carers with an individual continuous professional development plan that aligns to their developing fostering career
- Offer opportunities for individual, shared and group learning in environments that are educative, empowering and value past experience.

Orange Grove Foster Care have an expectation that Foster Carers will:

- Be prepared to develop their skills throughout their fostering career
- Attend relevant training
- Take up opportunities offered
- Inform the Agency if they are unable to attend training events and contribute to support groups.

### **Pre Approval Training**

All prospective Foster Carers must attend Skills To Foster Training which covers the responsibilities of being a Foster Carer and working with Orange Grove. This is an initial three day course which leads into the conclusion of the Foster Carer assessment process.

### **Post Approval Training and Professional Development**

Following approval by the ADM all Foster Carers receive a thorough induction undertaken by the Supervising Social Worker.

The Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards workbook is introduced and initial planning for completion is started. Each Foster Carer household should be able to evidence through the workbook how the TSD for foster care has been achieved within a year of approval. All newly approved Foster Carers are required as part of their approval to complete all the core training within the first twelve months of approval, in line with the Training Policy.

There will be training available for all Foster Carers throughout the year. Following the first annual review Carers will be expected to continue with their professional development through supervision every month and by attending training.

Orange Grove Foster Care has e-learning available to all carers which offers the core training alongside refresher courses other titles. The e-learning is managed by the Learning and Development Team

The aim of the training programme is to provide Foster Carers with the skills and knowledge to

become the catalyst through which the child / young person can grow and meet their full potential. It provides Foster Carers with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to help children when they are at their most challenging.

## **Section 13 Supporting Foster Carers to Care for Children**

Orange Grove values the work Foster Carers do and the contributions they make to looked after children's lives. It is vitally important to provide appropriate levels of support to foster care families to ensure a positive and successful placement. Orange Grove Foster Care provides a creative and flexible package of support to Foster Carers and the children and young people in their Care. Identifying and arranging the necessary level of support required takes place when a Foster Carer and child/young person are "matched" at the placement planning stages. Support is then monitored and tailored accordingly, during the course of the placement.

All Orange Grove Foster Carers have a named, qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker allocated to them. Despite not having case management for the young people in placement, Orange Grove Supervising Social Workers constantly ensure that the needs of the young people are paramount.

Orange Grove Foster Care provides the following support to all our Foster Carers:

**Qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker** – who will offer the foster carer:

- 🌱 Monthly supervision visits which focus on positive developments for the Foster Carer and young person in placement, as well as any areas of concern. Supervisions also enable the Carer to ensure that the child's assessed needs are being met and the Care Plan is being adhered to. A record of supervision is provided to the Foster Carer and placed on their file following the supervision
- 🌱 Ongoing support and contact with Foster Carers and children in placement through visits and telephone calls
- 🌱 Guidance and advice to the Foster Carer in relation to their Care of the children and young people
- 🌱 Identifying training and development needs and methods of developing the carer's skills and knowledge – as evidenced in the Carers Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- 🌱 Liaising with other professionals who may be involved in the Care of the child or young person and contribute to formal Care Plans
- 🌱 Identify and help respond to Foster Carers' training needs
- 🌱 Maintain accurate records of the progress of all matters relating to the Foster Carer and the child/young person placed, including outcomes.

**Foster Carer Forums** - Foster Carers Forums take place to enable Orange Grove Foster Carers to meet, socialise, share good practice, develop peer support and receive training and information from the Agency.

**Emergency Support** - Orange Grove Foster Care provides 24/7, 365 days a year, on-call service and support to our Foster Carers. This service is staffed by a qualified and experienced Supervising Social Worker with access to a Registered Manager / PSW / Team Manager.

**Foster Carer Reviews** - All Foster Carers have an annual review to ensure that they continue to meet the standards demanded by Orange Grove, to be suitable to hold registration and approval as a Foster Carer. The Reviewing Officer ensures that all statutory requirements are fulfilled and that foster carers have the opportunity to evaluate their practice and development,

and to set new goals and action plans for the following year.

**Policies and Procedures** - All Orange Grove Foster Cares have access to the Company's Policies and Procedures, together with information and guidance on all aspects of fostering. All information is regularly updated to comply with standards and regulations.

**Orange Grove Foster Care Website** - Orange Grove Foster Carers have access to a secure section of the Agencies website, where they can access vital information, including the Foster Carer Handbook, guidance, forms and information on all aspects of fostering.

**Record Keeping** - Foster Carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child / young person in placement. Foster Carers are also duty bound to complete monthly reports on the child / young person in placement which support the compilation of regular reports for LA Social Workers.

**Supporting Children who Foster** - Orange Grove recognise the significant contribution that birth children play in successful placements. Events and opportunities are provided for birth children to come together to discuss with the Agencies staff, and other birth children the impact – positives and negatives – of sharing their home and family with a fostered child.

**FosterTalk Membership** - All Orange Grove Foster Carers are entitled to an annual membership of the FosterTalk, paid for by the agency, which provides advice and guidance as well as access to legal advice, mediation and insurance.

**CoramBAAF** - Foster Carers are able to access CoramBAAF for information on fostering.

**Finance** - All Orange Grove Foster Carers receive an allowance paid monthly in arrears. Foster Carers are entitled to 2 weeks paid respite and receive a mileage allowance for excessive mileage undertaken.

**Tax and NI** - All Foster Cares are self employed and as such must pay their own tax and NI.


**Unannounced Visit** – All Orange Grove Foster Carers receive two unannounced visits a year.

**Therapeutic Support** - Orange Grove Foster Care employs qualified and experienced Therapists who work locally.

All Foster Carers with children and young people in placement will be offered advice and support by a Therapist and consideration is given as to ways that their placement can meet a child's emotional needs. The focus of attention is to make placements more successful by assisting and supporting Foster Carers to better understand and manage the presenting behaviours of the children and young people.

If individual therapy for a child or young person would be beneficial to meeting their needs, this will be supported by the Therapist, who will prepare a report to the Placing Authority, with suggestions about which approach is recommended and the implications of this. Should the Therapist's recommendation of individual therapy for a child be approved, Orange Grove Foster Care may be able to identify and appoint the appropriate therapist at an additional cost.

**Additional support** - This may include:

-  Frequent visits and telephone calls from an Orange Grove Supervising Social Worker

- 🌻 14 nights of respite (additional respite offered on a needs-led basis)
- 🌻 The Agency will endeavour, with the help and support of carers, to ensure that all carers have a Respite Carer and Back-Up Carer in place
- 🌻 Target of 4 activities per office for carers and children, e.g. Pantomime, BBQ, etc.
- 🌻 Weekend for birth children – where appropriate.
- 🌻 Independent allegation support services to carers
- 🌻 Social Worker attendance at meetings, conferences, reviews, etc

**Having Fun** - Orange Grove Foster Care recognise that taking care of other people's children is a serious business and can be challenging and at times stressful. We believe that it's important to come together informally to share experiences and socialise. At Orange Grove we support our carers to ensure they remain positive, focused and stress free.

**Carer Events** - Orange Grove Foster Care hold carer events to which all Foster Carers are invited. This is an opportunity to:

- 🌻 Meet and Socialise
- 🌻 Make new friends
- 🌻 Receive up to date information
- 🌻 Listen to excellent speakers
- 🌻 Have fun.

Orange Grove Foster Care views this package as a positive way of ensuring that Foster Carers are fully supported and placements are successful. Children and young people placed within Orange Grove Foster Care may have experienced a number of rejections and Orange Grove Foster Care recognise the value of high quality, relevant and responsive support, in ensuring that we minimise the risk of this happening again.

## **Section 14 Supporting Children and Young People**

All children and young people in placement with Orange Grove Foster Care are visited regularly as part of the role of the Supervising Social Worker. Orange Grove also employ Family Support Workers who ensure that a complete needs led and joined up professional package of support is made available for all children and young people in Care.

Orange Grove Foster Care believes that, with appropriate and targeted packages of support for Foster Carers, children and young people can live more naturally, in a family environment. We believe that it is important to remain flexible, responsive and forward thinking and we endeavour to ensure that the following are in place for children and young people in our Care:

- 🌻 Assistance to pursue a hobby or interest, including holiday activities.
- 🌻 An allocated Social Worker from the Placing Authority, who will maintain contact with them throughout placement, conduct statutory visits and make care planning decisions with and for them.
- 🌻 Orange Grove Foster Care Social Workers may undertake specific roles where requested to and funded appropriately by the Placing Authority.
- 🌻 Individual or group work, including structured activities for children when out of school.
- 🌻 Social activities for the birth children of Foster Carers.
- 🌻 Access to National organisations for looked after children and young people.
- 🌻 Practical assistance with transport and access to external facilities and services.
- 🌻 Supervised contact with families.
- 🌻 Life story work.

- 🌱 Young Persons' Guide.
- 🌱 Permanency planning.
- 🌱 Orange Grove Foster Care has a commitment to a child centred service through the promotion of a broader understanding of the emotional needs of children and young people and the implications for their Foster Carers.
- 🌱 Independent Children's Helpline for foster children and birth children.

### **Additional Events:**

Orange Grove Foster Care arrange regular consultation and participation groups for young people:

- 🌱 Childrens' Forum
- 🌱 Birth Children Weekend.

## **Section 15 Statistical Information**

### **Number of Foster Carers**

As at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 the number of approved Foster Families in the Southern Counties Office was 48

As the number of referrals of children and young people needing foster placements always outweighs the number of approved Foster Carers with suitable vacancies, Orange Grove Business Planning is continually active in relation to the Recruitment and Assessment of prospective Foster Carers.

The Southern Counties Office has 4 prospective Foster Carer families in their assessment process.

### **Number of Fostered Children and Young People**

There are 61 children and young people placed with the Southern Counties Office of Orange Grove Foster Care.

Of those:

20 of these children and young people have been in placement for less than six months.

4 of these children and young people have been in placement for between six and twelve months

37 of these children and young people have been in placement for over twelve months

18 of the children and young people placed are of black or ethnic minority origin

21 of the children and young people placed are female

40 of the children and young people placed are male

5 of the children and young people placed are aged 0-5 years

11 of the children and young people placed are aged 6-10 years

26 of the children and young people placed are aged 11-15 years

19 of the children and young people placed are aged 16+ years



## Section 16 Outcomes

Orange Grove Foster Care believes and is dedicated to ensure that:

- 🌱 Children and young people are appropriately matched into a suitable foster family.
- 🌱 Children and young people are healthy and access leisure and health services.
- 🌱 Any health needs are understood and monitored.
- 🌱 Children and young people are safe.
- 🌱 Foster Carers are appropriately recruited, trained, monitored and supervised.
- 🌱 Children and young people achieve their full potential.
- 🌱 All children in Care enjoy their experiences and develop self confidence.
- 🌱 All children in Care attend education and thrive to the best of their ability.
- 🌱 The recruitment of staff and Foster Carers is focused on children and young people.
- 🌱 Children and young people in Care are involved in decisions regarding their life.
- 🌱 Children and young people are prepared for their future.

## Section 17 Quality Assurance

Orange Grove Foster Care operates a dynamic quality assurance and continual improvement framework, with centralised and controlled policies and procedures, and a central source of controlled documentation, national information, advice and support.

Performance and objectives across the organisation are standardised, recorded, monitored and evaluated through evidenced data collection and analysis throughout all offices. This results in a robust and clear evaluation of working, best practice, standardisation and the achievement of positive outcomes.

The promotion of continual improvement throughout all aspects of the service increases quality awareness within our staff teams, experienced and dedicated foster carers and children placed with Orange Grove Foster Carers, who are supported to achieve positive outcomes.

In relation to Orange Grove Foster Panels we have a robust process for assessors to follow, to ensure every Form F achieves the standard required, with robust analysis, detailed information and all necessary completed checks. Form F's and all Panel paperwork is checked by the Registered Manager to ensure completeness, accuracy and compliance. It is then approved for Panel acceptance by liaison between the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor in advance of circulation to Panel Members. Any paperwork that is not Panel ready is immediately returned to the office for completion or removal from Panel if the compliance issues cannot be addressed in time. All Panel members are required to complete a Summary Sheet on all new assessments and reviews presented to Panel and forward this to the Panel Chair. The Summary Sheets help to monitor the quality of work submitted to Panel and Panels continual development. They also ensure that any issues, concerns and positives are identified prior to Panel and raised with the Chair, ADM and Panel Advisor as necessary. Panel Members also record on the Summary Sheets questions they would like to ask at Panel and the Chair will collate this information prior to Panel to ensure a smooth, efficient, effective and transparent process.



Outcome of children and young people are monitored to review progress and outcomes.

## **Section 18 Complaints and Compliments**

A complaint is a form of consultation which may generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with a service provided by the Agency, which requires a response. This might be an appropriate service, a decision-making process, the standard or quality of service, no service or inadequate service.

At their most extreme, complaints raise safeguarding concerns that require immediate statutory investigation. At a lower level, they provide valuable feedback about how services to children and young people can be improved. All complaints are treated seriously and proportionately. They must be reported and recorded clearly and quickly and passed on to the relevant manager for their urgent consideration at the first opportunity.

### **Who can make a complaint or representation?**

- Children and young people placed with the Orange Grove carers and care leavers previously placed with the Agency carers;
- Foster Carers, staff members, Local Authorities or any other person who has had involvement with the Agency;
- Foster carers, birth parents, relatives or significant others on behalf of children fostered, as considered by the Agency to have sufficient interest in the child or young person.

A complaint can be made up to 12 months from the event giving rise to it. This time limit can be extended at the discretion of the Complaints Officer.

If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, then the Agency may be unable to investigate the situation. If there is any indication of a child being at risk, the information will be passed on to the relevant Local Authority / notification to Ofsted..

Orange Grove welcomes the opportunity to reflect on practice and service provision to provide a safe and positive experience for children and young people with the Agency carers. The complaints procedure should offer a useful tool for indicating where our services may need improving; conversely compliments can indicate to us what we are doing well.

Orange Grove aspires that concerns, representations and complaints are resolved swiftly. The Agency will ensure that the person making a complaint is kept informed at all times of the progress of the procedure throughout, and that they are consistently treated with dignity and respect, with all staff members being open and courteous in their communication with the complainant.

Orange Grove will take account of the rights of the complainant, of their culture, disability, gender and method of communication when undertaking an investigation. Staff should be

especially sensitive to the needs of children with particular communication problems to ensure they receive equal access to the complaints procedures.

Orange Grove will manage all complaints in accordance with information sharing and data protection requirements. Records will be kept securely, with consideration to the importance of confidentiality.

All Complaints and Representations will be monitored by the Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer must be advised of all matters regarding complaints or representations. The Complaints Officer will notify the Registered Manager where he / she is not already aware; the written record of all complaints / representations shall at all times be available to the Registered Manager.

The Complaints Officer will also report to the management team, complaints, representations and their outcomes so they may be used to further develop practice, policies and procedures.

No person subject to a complaint or representation shall take part in its consideration, unless considered appropriate by the Registered Manager.

Should a complaint or representation be received concerning the Registered Manager or Senior Manager, the Complaints Officer will appoint an independent person to undertake an investigation.

Orange Grove hopes that most things that someone is concerned about can be settled and resolved prior to embarking into the Complaints process, through discussion with the person they would ordinarily have most contact with, or through discussion with their line manager. Where a concern has been raised, in the event that such discussion does not provide the desired outcome, the individual should be consulted as to whether they wish the matter to be managed as a Representation or whether he / she wishes to proceed into the Complaints process. A copy of the Complaints, Representations and Compliments Policy and Procedure should be provided to the complainant to maximise clarity of process.

In the event of the individual wishing to embark on the Complaints process, the following stages of the procedure should be followed.

### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

Every opportunity shall be made for any complaint to be resolved at an early stage. At the outset, the complainant should be asked for their desired outcome.

A complaint is considered as made on the date on which it is first received by the Agency. Complaints may be submitted in writing or given verbally. Where given verbally, this must be recorded in writing by the recipient and dated.

The recipient of the Complaint is required to immediately inform the Complaints Officer, who will within 3 working days of being informed, provide written acknowledgement to the Complainant.

Complaints will in the first instance be investigated within the Registration in an attempt to resolve the complaint informally. The person identified as the most appropriate to respond to the Complainant will be appointed to lead on the complaint at this stage and will discuss the complaint with the Complaints Officer.

The Complaints Officer should aim to conclude complaints being dealt with at Stage 1 within 10 working days of being notified of the complaint. This timescale may however be extended by mutual agreement by a further 10 working days if it is felt the Complaint can be satisfactorily dealt with informally but more time is needed. You may be contacted by telephone to discuss your complaint in more detail.

If the matter is resolved the Complaints Officer will be duly informed. The local Registration will provide a written response to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution and this will be copied to the Complaints Officer.

In the event that an Informal Resolution cannot be reached within the above timescales, the Complaints Officer will inform the complainant that he / she has the right to move on to Stage 2 if he / she so wishes. However, in circumstances where the complainant still wishes to continue within Stage 1 in order to reach Informal Resolution, the time period may be further extended to a maximum of a further 10 working days with the complainant's agreement or at his / her request.

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally at Stage 1, or if the Complaint is considered to be sufficiently serious to warrant a more formal investigation, Stage 2 of the Complaints process should be implemented.

## **Stage 2: Formal Investigation**

The complainant should contact the Complaints Officer either in writing or verbally, providing reasons why they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 of the Complaints procedure and that they wish to proceed to Stage 2.

Receipt will be acknowledged in writing by the Complaints Officer within seven working days, with a proposed plan of investigation, including an estimated timescale. In the event that the nature of the Complaint received and the desired outcome is not sufficiently apparent, this should be clarified by the Complaints Officer and may be sent to the complainant for confirmation.

Thereafter Stage 2 investigation shall, subject to accessibility of communication with the complainant, take no longer than 25 working days from the date of the start of the formal investigation. Occasionally, due to unforeseen circumstances, this deadline may not be met and in that event the complainant will be notified accordingly. Any extension to this timescale will be agreed with the Complaints Officer, taking into consideration the availability of the complainant and others who may be required to partake in the process of investigation.

Written confirmation of the outcome of the formal investigation shall be sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the completion of the investigation by the Complaints Officer.

The Complaints Officer will ensure that the complaint is properly investigated and will assign a lead investigator by whom the investigation will be conducted. The investigation will be undertaken by a suitably qualified employee which will ordinarily be the Registered Manager, unless the Registered Manager is the subject of the complaint, or has already been instrumental in response to the complaint under Stage 1. In such circumstances, a person suitably independent of the complaints process to date will be identified by the Complaints Officer to undertake the investigation. The Complaints Officer may be the appropriate person to complete an investigation.

The investigating officer will have access to:

- Content and context of the complaint made;
- Orange Grove Foster Care policies and procedures;
- Relevant file records (written consent to be provided by the complainant where the investigating officer is external to the Agency).

The complainant may bring a support person to any meeting convened, or in the case of a child or young person, they may attend with an advocate. The Complaints Officer should ensure that the complainant is adequately supported in the meeting and that detailed and accurate (though not verbatim) minutes are taken and kept.

All persons relevant to the complaint should be informed of the complaint and interviewed in order to provide explanation of their account of the matters complained against.

A meeting may be proposed involving both those complaining and those complained against, should this be deemed helpful in resolution of the complaint received. However this is not recommended where any persons involved are likely to feel intimidated.

On conclusion of the investigation, a written report shall be prepared by the person undertaking the investigation within 5 working days and sent to the Complaints Officer, which will incorporate the process of the investigation, findings of each point of the complaint (i.e. whether upheld or not upheld) recommendations of any actions required and learning outcomes.

The Complaints Officer will provide a written response to the Complaint within a further 5 working days. This should, as far as possible, answer all issues raised by the complainant, be as helpful as possible and apology provided for any shortcomings in the service found and what action the Agency intends to take as a result of the investigation into the Complaint.

Where the Complaint is in regard to an employee of the Agency, the HR Manager should be consulted prior to the written response being sent.

Those who are subject of the Complaint should be informed in writing of the outcome of the Complaint together with any actions arising.

In the event that the complainant raises additional matters at the point of requesting progression of the complaint to Stage 2, consideration should be given to seeking an outcome through a separate Stage 1 investigation for any such additional matters.

However, where agreement is reached between the complainant and the Complaints Officer, the additional matters may be incorporated into Stage 2.

### **Stage 3: Independent Investigation**

If the complainant continues to feel that their complaint has not been dealt with to their satisfaction, Stage 3 may be implemented. The complainant should inform the Complaints Officer, preferably in writing, that they wish to progress their complaint to Stage 3, within 28 days of receipt of written confirmation of the outcome of Stage 2, providing reasons why they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the procedure.

The Complaints Officer will acknowledge this request within 7 working days, with explanation of the process of independent investigation. The Complaints Officer will notify the Chief Operating Officer and Responsible Individual in writing of the complaint.

The Complaints Officer will liaise with the complainant with potential dates for the Panel Meeting subject to reasonable availability. This timescale is subject to ongoing communication with the complainant, unless agreed between the complainant and Complaints Officer that this period should be extended.

The Complaints Panel and Meeting will be convened within 30 working days, comprised of three people, to include an Agency Director and two persons independent of the Agency. One person should be assigned as Chair of the Panel by the Complaints Officer in order to contribute to the organisation of the Panel.

The Complaints Panel will consider any oral or written submissions and the process to date. All written materials must be made available to the members of the Complaints Panel a minimum of 5 working days in advance of the Panel Meeting.

The complainant may bring someone with them to support them at the Panel Meeting. A child or young person may bring an advocate who would also have the right to speak at the Panel.

The Panel will arrange for other relevant parties concerned with the complainant to attend as required. When the Panel has considered all information and views presented the Meeting will end.

The Panel will reach a decision within 24 hours of the meeting. The Panel will complete a written report of their investigation, which will include:

- The process and adequacy of the investigation prior to Stage 3;
- Findings on each of the complaints being investigated;
- Conclusions / outcomes reached;

- Recommendations of actions required / learning outcomes to be considered.

The Panel will communicate its decision and conclusions in writing to the Complaints Officer within 5 working days.

The Complaints Officer will write within 5 working days of receipt of the written Panel decision to the complainant setting out their proposals for resolving the complaint and consideration to learning outcomes.

### **Completion of Complaints Procedure**

Completion of Stage 3 marks the end of the Complaints Procedure. In the event that the complaint cannot be resolved through the above processes, to the satisfaction of all, the complainant may refer the matter to Ofsted.

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

The complaint may be withdrawn either verbally or in writing by the complainant. Orange Grove Foster Care must write to the complainant to confirm the withdrawal of the complaint. In such circumstances, it is good practice for the Agency to give consideration as to whether it wishes to continue to consider the issues that gave rise to the complaint and any consequent learning outcomes.

### **Complaint Monitoring**

The Complaints Officer and Registered Manager shall keep a register of all complaints that records details of complaints and their resolutions.

Details of any investigation into a complaint or representation regarding a foster carer will be made available for information to the Agency Fostering Panel.

### **Carer Allegation**

Children can be subjected to abuse by those who work with them in any and every setting. All allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a professional, staff member, Foster Carer, or any other person in contact with children will be taken seriously by Orange Grove Foster Care and treated in accordance with current procedures. Orange Grove Foster Care has a clear Carer Allegation support system.

### **Whistle-Blowing**

Orange Grove Foster Care aims to nurture an environment for children, young people, foster carers and staff and all others relevant to the care of children and young people placed to feel able to raise issues and draw attention to gaps in service provision without fear of reprisal. The Agency has a Whistleblowing Policy for reporting circumstances that may arise where foster carers or employees feel unable to raise concerns because they feel there is reasonable doubt that these would be dealt with sufficiently.

### **Compliments**

All compliments received from children, young people, Foster Carers, Local Authorities and any other body, are recorded and monitored on a regular basis.

## **Section 19 Contact Details**

### **Orange Grove Foster Care Limited Company Registered Office**

Wavendon Tower  
Ortensia Drive  
Wavendon Gate  
Milton Keynes  
Bucks  
MK17 8LX  
Telephone number: 01908 804400

### **Orange Grove Foster Care Limited Southern Counties Registration**

9 Victoria Way,  
Burgess Hill  
RH15 9NF  
Telephone number: 01444 873360

---

### **The Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner**

The Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT  
Tel: 020 7783 8330  
Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)  
**Web:** [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

---

### **Ofsted**

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
Telephone 0300 123 1231  
Textphone 0161 618 8524  
Email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)