

St Christopher's Fellowship Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

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ST CHRISTOPHER'S FELLOWSHIP

Founded in 1870, St Christopher's Fellowship has provided care to vulnerable children and young people for over 140 years. St Christopher's is a registered charity and social housing provider. It offers a range of services including residential care, fostering, supported housing and leaving care support. Our services are continually reviewed and developed to ensure they meet the needs of the children we look after and our commissioners. Drawing on our broad experience, we help build brighter futures for young people. Currently St Christopher's offers a large network of services throughout London, the South East, the Isle of Man, Bedfordshire and the Midlands.

St Christopher's **vision** is for every child and young person to be safe, happy, achieve their potential and have a bright future.

St Christopher's **mission** is to create brighter futures for children and young people. We do this by providing fostering, residential and support services where children and young people can feel safe and cared for. We support them to build positive relationships which give them the confidence to succeed.

St Christopher's **values** are to be caring and respectful, professional and flexible, honest and creative.

St Christopher's values: Our ways of working

We **care** about children, young people and our staff, and are building positive relationships

We know that positive and trusting relationships transform troubled lives, and our staff and carers are increasingly working in ways which promote positive relationships with children, young people, and their families and friends. We are always looking to improve how we work together within St Christopher's and how we work in partnership with our commissioners and supporters.

We are **respectful** of every individual, and value the strengths in everyone

Our approach is founded on a commitment to individual human rights. We are building teams where everyone is valued for what they bring, and which support children and young people to be who they want to be.

We are **professional** and committed to reflection and continuous learning

We aim for high standards, and we know that by reflecting together, we can learn and improve.

We are **flexible**, and adapting so that we can be fit for the future

We do everything we can to respond to the individual and changing needs of the children and young people we look after, and to respond to what each of our commissioners want us to deliver. We are building our capacity to adapt to what the future brings.

We are **honest** about what we can do, and optimistic about the future

We don't say things we can't deliver, and we want to be able to achieve more.

We are **creative**, and passionate about positive change

The best insights into how to create change come when we listen to children and young people, in ways they want to talk to us. So we do things together and have fun together so that we can create energy and enthusiasm for change.

St Christopher's also endorses and upholds the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We encourage children to express their views and listen to what they have to say; we treat everybody equally and do not discriminate, when making decisions we put the best interests of children first.

TYPES OF FOSTERING

St Christopher's is able to provide foster carers trained and supported to a high level, for a range of different needs, including:

Task-centred fostering: Foster carers are sometimes asked to look after children for specific reasons and to undertake set tasks to achieve the aims of the care plan. Often this will involve working more closely with other professionals

Respite: Foster carers may be asked to look after children for short regular breaks either where families are struggling to manage or where a child with a disability is given a regular break with a linked carer. They may also provide short breaks to children who are looked after by a St Christopher's foster carer – where this is the case, they will usually be linked to the carer so that the child feels part of both families.

Emergency: Sometimes children or young people may need to be looked after in an emergency without the opportunity for a planned introduction. This could be because social workers need to quickly identify somewhere safe for the child to stay. Our foster families are trained to receive emergency placements, focus on the child and deal with their confusion and upset.

Long term: Sometimes the courts may decide that a child or young person cannot return home to live with their family and a permanent substitute family needs to be found. Children in long-term placements are carefully matched with foster carers who are well-suited to enable them to reach their potential and achieve a sense of stability and belonging. These placements will usually last until the young person is 18. Where it is appropriate and part of the care plan, St Christopher's foster carers are supported to continue to help young people beyond their 18th birthday.

Solo placements: For children who are not able to share their living arrangements with other looked after children we offer solo placements. These young people receive additional social work support and involvement from St Christopher's specialist team which may include the consultant psychiatrist and clinical psychologist.

Parent and child placement: Sometimes a parent, usually the mother, needs a lot of support in the early months to learn how to look after her baby and how to put the baby's needs before her own. Often the mother is a young mother. St Christopher's trains the foster carer to support and

coach the mother to look after the baby herself. In some cases, the foster carer will be working as part of a team, in preparing an assessment for court proceedings which will determine whether the child is to remain in the care of the mother, or perhaps be adopted. Where court reports are required, the foster carer will have additional support from St Christopher's social workers or consultants to help them in completing these. Currently this service is only available in the Eastern Region foster team.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The work of all fostering service providers throughout England is governed by the

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Care Planning Regulations 2010
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The National Minimum Standards for Foster Care (revised 2011)
- Volume 4 The Children Act 1989
- Guidance and Regulations: Fostering Services (revised 2011).

These pieces of legislation, alongside the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Equalities Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, guide and underpin the practice of St Christopher's Fellowship.

St Christopher's Fostering service is registered, regulated and monitored by Ofsted.

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 stipulate that all fostering service providers must have a written Statement of Purpose (which must be provided to the Chief Inspector) and Children's Guide which must be provided to the Chief Inspector, to each foster parent and to any child placed. These documents are also available on St Christopher's website and will be provided upon request to the following:

- a) Any person working for the purpose of the fostering services;*
- b) Any foster parent or prospective foster parents of the fostering service;*
- c) Any child placed with a foster parent by the fostering service; and*
- d) The parent of any such child.*

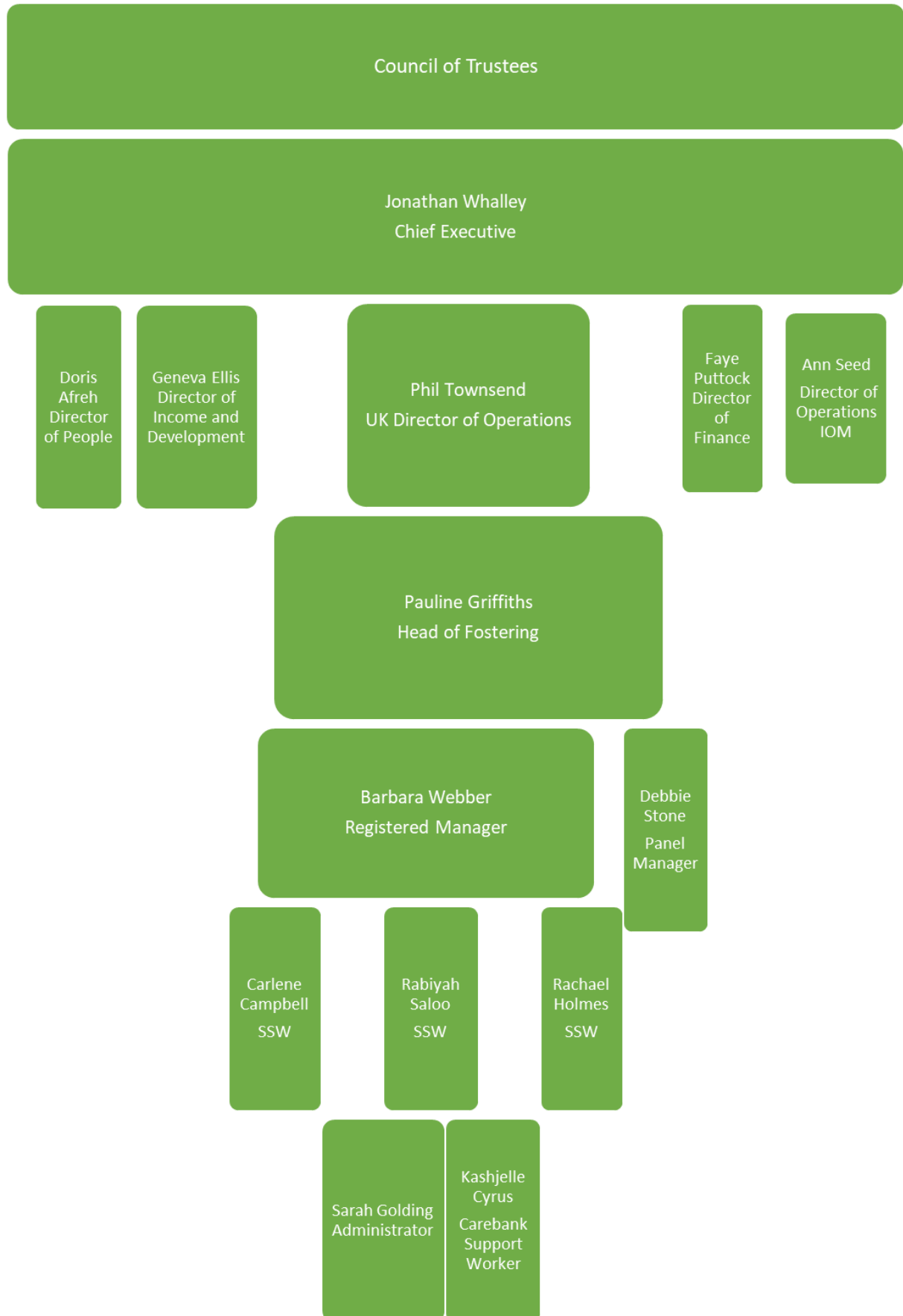
St Christopher's Fellowship is flexible in our approach and willing to embrace and be guided by the continually changing nature of childcare. We are passionate about incorporating and developing best practise across the organisation's services and policies. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, at least annually, or as deemed necessary to ensure that this ethos is reflected in practice.

OVERVIEW

St Christopher's Fellowship has the unique advantage of operating as a childcare charity (founded in 1870) and a social housing provider (registered in 1976). The St Christopher's Fellowship Group is governed by a council of voluntary trustees and encompasses three charities – St Christopher's Fellowship, St Christopher's (Isle of Man) and the St Pancras Foundation – together with a not-for-profit company (SCF Services Ltd).

St Christopher's services have been developed in partnership with Local Authorities, or as a response to perceived need. Currently St Christopher's helps thousands of children and young people each year.

THE STRUCTURE OF ST CHRISTOPHER'S FOSTERING



The Role of the Foster Carer

St Christopher's works in partnership with its foster carers on behalf of Local Authorities to provide a high level of quality care for children and young people. St Christopher's foster carers are supported by supervising social workers and support workers. In addition, individual foster carers and the service as a whole are supported by an education consultant, a psychologist and a music therapist. Foster carers work with the children placed with them, to achieve stability for the child and positive outcomes in accordance with the child's care plan.

St Christopher's works with its foster carers and supports them to facilitate and promote contact between a child and their family; to ensure that rehabilitation is achieved where appropriate, or to maintain positive links if a return home is not possible. St Christopher's staff work with foster carers to promote the stability and well being of children placed, including their well being post-18 years.

The foster carer will work in partnership with other professionals such as therapists, teachers and doctors to promote the social, physical and emotional wellbeing of any child that they look after.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims

St Christopher's aims to:

- Work in partnership with Local Authorities to ensure that we provide high quality foster carers from diverse backgrounds who are able to meet the needs of such Local Authorities and the children and young people in their care.
- Provide specialist resources, such as health and education support workers enabling a multi-disciplinary support approach.
- Recruit a team of highly capable foster carers for the purpose of providing a fostering service to Local Authorities.
- Ensure that all approved carers are capable of providing a high standard of care that reflects the needs of children and is safe, nurturing, supportive and consistent.
- Offer a range and variety of placements for children where, with the exception of some siblings, all children will have their own bedroom.
- Ensure that all children are appropriately matched with carers and the service they receive meets their individual needs.

- Ensure that careful consideration is given to racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds as well as the sexuality, gender and any needs relating to the disability of children and young people.
- Work towards achieving effective outcomes for the children in accordance with their care plan.
- Listen to the views of children, young people and those significant to them, as well as foster carers and staff in planning and carrying out all of the organisation's activities.
- Make sure that St Christopher's not only listens, but also takes into consideration and acts on expressed views and perceived needs.
- Provide information about its services to all children, young people, foster carers and others who are entitled to receive this, in ways that are helpful and appropriate to them.
- Offer 24-hour support for foster carers, children and young people in placement.

Objectives

All staff and foster carers are committed to supporting children to achieve their full potential. We work together to meet the following objectives for the child or young person:

Ensuring that the child is healthy

- Health and development needs are identified
- Children attend essential health appointments
- Children and young people are supported to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Additional help is accessed if required
- Staff and carers are competent and skilled to identify and respond to early indicators of mental health issues

Promoting safeguarding and child protection

- Risks to the child are known and protective factors are in place. Risk assessments achieve a balance between safety and promoting independence
- Carers are recruited, assessed and supervised through processes that meet the National Minimum Standards
- The fostering panel operates in accordance with both regulatory and best practice requirements
- The supervising social workers ensure that they see children in placement regularly and on their own
- Ensure that children and young people are encouraged to provide feedback to St Christopher's about their experience in foster care as part of the foster carer's review and at other times, and know how to make a complaint
- Provide training for foster carers including safer care, child protection and de-escalation techniques for promoting positive behaviours

Ensuring that the child enjoys and achieves

- Staff and foster carers take into account issues of equality and diversity and how they impact on each child by planning for religious, cultural, linguistic, gender and disability needs
- Ensure children or young people attend and are supported in full time education, training or employment
- Ensure additional help is accessed if required
- Encourage children and young people to engage safely in leisure activities of their choice
- Encourage children to express ambitions for their future
- Enable staff and foster carers to celebrate the achievement of children and young people

Helping the child to make a positive contribution

- Children and young people are encouraged to express their views and to influence decisions that affect their lives. Their views are listened to, acknowledged and appropriately responded to
- Children and young people are assisted to seek the support of advocates if appropriate
- Children and young people have the support necessary to enable them to develop a positive self view
- Children and young people are encouraged to take part in community-based activities and to contribute to the development of the service
- Children and young people are supported to deal with changes in their lives

To work with the child towards achieving economic independence

- Children and young people are supported to attain practical life skills
- Children and young people are encouraged to save money and learn to manage their finances
- Children and young people are supported to take up post school training/employment opportunities
- Young people are supported to use appropriate agencies and networks that help prepare them for independence

Helping the child to 'stay put' or move on at the appropriate time

- At St Christopher's Fostering, we work with the young person in placement, their foster carer and the Local Authority to ensure that whenever the Care Plan is in agreement, that a young person can stay in their foster family beyond 18 years. St Christopher's in its planning also ensures that it
- adheres to the young person's placement plan, pathway plan and transition plan when looking after children with disabilities and special education needs. The process of planning for adulthood begins long before the young person's 18th birthday, since we believe that as part of their normal growth and development, all young people need to be helped to prepare for their eventual independence. Sometimes this might mean that they are allowed to take appropriate risks – which they will be helped to assess.

- Our foster carers are trained and supported to help young people make the transition to independence. During the life of the placement, supervising social workers liaise closely with the Local Authority to ensure that practical matters are addressed at an early stage in order that there is security for the young person (and the family). When a child is staying put supervising social workers ensure that the financial arrangements are appropriate and that support to the child and family continues at the appropriate level; when a child is moving on to independence supervising social workers ensure, through the Local Authority, that everything is in place to support them. This might be in relation to: their continued education needs; support to obtain employment; finding suitable accommodation; furnishing accommodation; achieving post care support from a different agency; managing their finances; registering with community support – for example health services.
- The ethos in St Christopher's is that all those we look after are supported into adulthood so that they can reach their potential and be in a position to manage their finances.

ANTI-BULLYING STATEMENT

Reasons for Risk Assessment

Every young person in foster care is entitled to courtesy, respect and consideration from all other young people and carers who they live with.

Our aim is to ensure that all young people within St Christopher's Fostering live in a safe environment and are protected from bullying at all times.

Categories of Bullying

Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional or a combination of these. For example: -

- When one person or a group threatens, frightens or hits another young person for pleasure or gain.
- Making someone feel miserable, small, and worthless, ridiculing, and laughing at him or her.
- When teasing goes too far and causes hurt.
- When a person is excluded by a group, not allowed to join in, not spoken to.

The foster carer will respond

Carers are required to give time to the bullied person, listen, reassure and then suggest a course of action.

When there is an allegation or suspicion that one young person has bullied or is bullying another then the circumstances shall be discussed with the Supervising social worker, child's social worker and the Fostering Manager.

Possible courses of action

- Foster carer confronts and deals with the bully directly.
- Foster carer will monitor the situation discreetly and will inform the relevant people
- The foster carer will ensure that the young person is kept safe
- Bullied young person monitors situation and then meets again with the foster carer/social worker
- That the bully is offered suitable guidance as to why they bully (remembering that they have probably been bullied)

Areas where bullying is likely to take place

- At school
- At activity clubs
- At home
- Out playing

Vigilance is required at all times when young people are in these areas.

Child Protection Referral

All those involved with the provision of care for young people will be vigilant to the possibility of bullying by other young people, visitors and other professionals. There are clear written procedures on how suspected bullying will be dealt with for young people, foster carers and staff to consult.

All bullying whether by other young people, foster carers, staff or visitors must be reported to the Social Services Duty Officer or the Police Protection Unit, and dealt with under Child Protection Procedures.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints are always treated seriously, and we will try to put things right as quickly as possible. In most cases the Fostering manager in line with our Complaints, compliments and feedback policy feedback policy and procedures will deal with the complaint in the first instance.

Information about how to make a complaint is given to all young people and carers on entering the service. Staff and carers talk to young people about their right to make a complaint and ensure that all young people we care for know how it can be made on their behalf. Young people have independent access to make a complaint through Mind of My Own app; they will also be supported to access advocacy through the Local Authorities Children's Rights Officer.

Complaints can be made via complaints@stchris.org.uk or through our regulatory body OFSTED enquiries@ofsted.or.uk or 0300 123 1231 or direct to a member of staff.

RECRUITING, APPROVING, TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND REVIEWING CARERS

St Christopher's recruits foster carers from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures to ensure that they can be matched with the children referred. We want people from all walks of life who have the right qualities to support a child or young person through a difficult period in their life. In particular, warmth, patience, understanding and a commitment to achieving the best outcomes for children are some of the qualities that we look for when we assess prospective foster carers.

All applicants undergo a comprehensive assessment process before being approved as foster carers. In addition, applicants must undertake preparation training in order to learn about the needs of children coming into foster care. This training also covers a variety of issues such as safer caring, safeguarding, promoting contact with parents, working together, managing behaviour, promoting diversity and moving on.

A range of stringent checks such as Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check, Local Authority checks and medicals will be carried out to ensure that foster carers meet the requirements stipulated by the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulation 2011 and National Minimum Standards (NMS).

Statutory checks will also be carried out on all other household members over the age of 16 years and any significant adult who is a regular visitor to the household and/or forms part of the applicant's support network.

On completion of the assessment, the social worker will present a report to St Christopher's fostering panel, who will then recommend, with reasons, whether or not the applicant should be approved as a carer. The agency decision maker (ADM) will then give final approval of the decision and will give reasons.

If approved, St Christopher's expects foster carers to sign a Foster Care Agreement that outlines St Christopher's expectations of them. Foster carers undergo annual household reviews to ensure that they continue to be suitable to carry on in their role as foster carers.

Once approved, all foster carers will be allocated a supervising social worker who will visit them on a regular basis, this will be at least monthly and will be face to face the majority of the time (at least 9 times a year) unless government guidance with reference to Covid infections makes this inadvisable. Home visits will always be made if there are concerns about standards of care or the safety of children and young people in our care. SSWs will provide foster carers with information, advice and support as required. They may also receive support from one of St Christopher's support workers.

Each child in placement will also have a social worker from the Local Authority who will need to visit regularly and discuss the child's progress.

St Christopher's will provide foster carers with all the information they receive about the child, together with information regarding the supervision and support they will receive. Foster carers will undergo an annual review of their performance. After their first year as foster carers this review will be presented to the Fostering Panel. Thereafter, if there are significant issues, subsequent reviews will be submitted to Panel. In addition, the Manager will periodically submit a random selection of reviews to Panel in order that Panel can be satisfied that reviews continue to be conducted in line with good practice. All reviews are undertaken by an Independent Review Chair. Review meetings and panel meetings may take place either face to face or on a digital platform. It is expected that where there have been concerns or difficulties, or where initial approval is being considered that the meetings will take place face to face whenever possible.

St Christopher's is committed to providing an extensive rolling programme of training for carers. The components include:

- Core knowledge – subjects include valuing diversity, child protection, safer caring, de-escalation techniques and managing challenging behaviour, promoting positive contact, promoting health and development, including the safe use of medication, promoting education and attachment and loss.
- Skills development – the training programme is regularly updated and includes a range of relevant topics to the fostering task. Well-qualified external and internal training providers are used to ensure that the training needs of foster carers and staff are met.
- Support group meetings – monthly meetings combine training and support. Carers are encouraged to share their concerns and to hear speakers on a range of topics.
- Foster carer reviews identify development plans in partnership with the carer. It is a condition of approval that St Christopher's carers commit to continuing development and training. St Christopher's endeavours to ensure that training is

timely, interesting and relevant to the carer's current needs, thus retaining the interest and commitment of the carer.

THE FOSTERING PANEL

St Christopher's Fostering Panel is constituted in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. The Panel has an independent Chair and a nominated Deputy as well as a social worker with three years relevant post qualifying experience. There is also a panel advisor. The Panel will always have a quorum of five members including the independent chair or another independent person and the social worker.

A 'central list' is compiled in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

The Panel is scheduled to meet monthly to consider each application for approval and to recommend:

- whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster parent and including any terms on which the approval is to be given
- whether a person/s is suitable to continue as a foster parent at the first annual review and at any other review when requested to do so by St Christopher's fostering service
- any other matters referred to it by St Christopher's fostering service
- any improvements to the management and quality of the service.

St Christopher's will ensure that where it is required legal and/or medical advice is available.

STAFF

Head of Fostering – Pauline Griffiths
Registered Manager – Barbara Webber
Supervising Social Worker – Carlene Campbell
Supervising Social Worker – Rabiya Saloo
Supervising Social Worker – Rachael Holmes
Fostering Administrator – Sarah Golding
Carebank Support Worker – Kashjelle Cyrus
Teaching Consultant – Beverley Michaels

The Registered Provider

Phil Townsend

Phil has worked for 20 at St Christopher's Fellowship and has line management responsibility for St Christopher's UK children's homes management, care leavers services and fostering service. He ensures he keeps himself up-to-date with changes to legislation and practice and disseminates this information across the services, ensuring continuous improvement. As an experienced Operational Director and organisational leader Phil has working knowledge of Working Together to Safeguard Children legislation and guidance including reporting, recording and coordination. He manages the organisation's designated safeguarding lead and ensures internal safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and up to date. He also ensures all our staff are compliant with current training standards and legislation. He has overseen the rollout of Prevent and safer recruitment training across St Christopher's and leads on the internal implementation of all new guidance and requirements. Phil is committed to the Christopher's values and ensures young people are at the heart of the organisation. He promotes the participation of young people and regularly visits services to hear their views, to ensure they are listened to and impacting on decision-making. Phil's vision is that all our children and young people are safe, happy, and achieve their potential. Phil is a senior member of St Christopher's strategic leadership team and possesses a Post Graduate qualification in Strategic Leadership from the Warwick Business School.

Caring for children and young people since 1870

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