



Safer Recruitment Policy

We consider staff, carers and independent workers as 'people in positions of trust' and to manage safeguarding arrangements as a result, including our Safer Recruitment practices.

As an equal opportunities employer, AFA undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly and equitably. The importance of equality of opportunity for all is recognised, as are the benefits of having diversity of talent, skills and potential. As such AFA welcomes applications from as wide a range of applicants as possible, including those with criminal records.

Safer Recruitment: Staff

Personnel employed by AFA Fostering must be suitable to work with children and young people and will be managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience will be sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the Agency.

Appointment of Staff

The existing staff members will be notified internally via email of the creation of a new post and to be invited to apply as appropriate.

The notification of a new post will be advertised on company website www.afafostering.com

Advertisements may be placed in professional magazines such as Community Care, local press jobs pages and online job sites for example EDP24 or Community Care Jobs. Recruitment Agency's may be used where appropriate.

Recruitment advertisements are to specify the nature of the position and the need for proof of professional qualifications, references from recent previous employer, statutory checks such as DBS checks and previous related experience. Advertisements are to comply with The Equality Act 2010 and to have an appropriate closing date for applications.

Respondents will be asked to apply for the position by contacting AFA Fostering to request an application pack or by downloading a link from the website were appropriate. Once completed this can be returned by post or email. The selection process will commence following the closing date for applications.

Applicants are asked to declare all 'unspent' convictions unless the nature of the position being applied for is exempt as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2001 and it is a requirement that an entire criminal record (including spent convictions) is declared. This will be made clear in the recruitment literature.

Where applicable, applicants will be given the opportunity at interview to discuss the subject of any declared offences or other matter and their relativity to the position being sought. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought will lead to the immediate withdrawal of any offer of employment.

All individuals are assured that the presence of a criminal record will not necessarily exclude them from employment with AFA. Any criminal background will be assessed by reference to the circumstances and nature of offences and how these relate to the nature of the position.

Shortlisting for interview where needed will be completed by the Line Manager for the post and a minimum of one Manager or HR personnel – the shortlisting is completed using anonymised application forms and using AFA Fostering's shortlisting form and the person specification for the position.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend for interview with at least one Manager and/or HR personnel and the Manager responsible for the post.

Staff who shall work directly with Foster Carers will need to demonstrate they have an appropriate qualification and have a good understanding of Foster Care including:

- Knowledge and understanding of the Children Act and Fostering Regulations and guidance, relevant current policies, i.e. National Minimum Standards, Working Together and associated child protection guidance, the framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, the regulatory requirements under the Care Standards Act.
- Knowledge of the growth and development of children and an ability to communicate with children and young people.
- An in-depth knowledge of Child Protection and safeguarding procedures
- Understanding the importance of a complaints procedure.
- An ability to promote equality, diversity and the rights of individuals in groups.
- Knowledge of the roles of other agencies, in particular social care, health, the Police, the Courts and education.

Applicants for jobs not directly involved with children and Foster Carers will need to demonstrate relevant knowledge, experience and skills for the position as appropriate as well as an understanding of safeguarding and data protection.

Interviewees will need to provide proof of identity, right to work in the UK, their professional relevant qualifications and previous related training. A second interview may be deemed necessary.

Applicants will be informed that any Offer Letter and Contract of Employment will only be offered 'subject to satisfactory references' i.e. the organisation deeming the proof of experience, qualifications and statutory checks to be satisfactory including verified references and DBS checks for all AFA fostering positions including office based.

The successful application will receive a staff handbook and contract notifying them of:

- The title of the job being offered
- Conditions attached to the offer
- Location of the job
- Details of salary, payment intervals and the review date
- Any significant benefits

- The starting date
- The hours of work
- Holiday entitlement
- To whom the new employee should report
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Termination procedure
- Confidentiality and data protection agreements
- Key policies

When rejecting job applicants, the unsuccessful candidates will receive a communication from AFA Fostering with the offer of feedback from the interview.

Withdrawals of job offers shall be made in writing and may be made if for example references are not satisfactory or statutory checks return adverse information.

All recruitment activities must comply at all times with Data Protection processes.

Safer Recruitment: Independent Social Workers (ISW)

When procuring the services of ISW's the Agency will ask that they provide the following:

- Anonymised samples of written/assessment work
- Certificates for qualifications
- HCPC registration
- Relevant documents for a DBS/ID check. (passport, driving licence and proof of address such as a utility bill or bank statement as well as addresses for the last 5 years). If they have a transferrable DBS, information about this will be needed instead, but driving licence/ID will still need to be seen to confirm identity.
- Proof of car insurance and MOT
- Proof of indemnity insurance
- Proof of ICO registration
- References who can be contacted by AFA

At point of meeting with the Manager responsible for sourcing the service the information provided is viewed and an Identity form completed and signed. A minimum of two referees are sort from the ISW and need to be provided in writing with consent to approach. The references must be verified on return. A DBS must also be undertaken as they are in a 'position of trust' and may have unsupervised contact with applicants/carers own children and children who are placed in their care.

ISWs are asked to declare all 'unspent' convictions unless the nature of the position being applied for is exempt as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2001 and it is a requirement that an entire criminal record (including spent convictions) is declared. This will be made clear in the recruitment literature. Where applicable, ISWs will be given the opportunity at the meeting held, to discuss the subject of any declared offences or other matter and their relativity to the position being sought. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought will lead to the immediate withdrawal of any offer of work.

All individuals are assured that the presence of a criminal record will not necessarily exclude them from employment with AFA. Any criminal background will be assessed by reference to the circumstances and nature of offences and how these relate to the nature of the position.

Once all checks have been returned, these will be filed and at that point, information relating to assessments and the assessor's agreement can be sent to the ISW.

If the Agency decides not to proceed with using an ISW following the meeting or return of relevant checks, the ISW will receive a communication from AFA advising them of this with the offer of feedback from the meeting.

If the services of the ISW are commissioned AFA will provide them with the relevant documents including:

- Assessors agreement, highlighting Data Protection expectations and use of equipment.
- Expectations of Form F assessors
- Templates for Form F
- Charms guide for assessors provided and access given
- Information regarding the Policy website

Record of all dialogue, discussions and sharing of documents/policies etc to be recorded as supervision notes on ISW file.

Safer Recruitment: Panel Members

When considering applicants as potential members of the AFA Fostering Panel, the following is completed:

- Application form completed and subsequent interview
- HCPC registration or other relevant body (if applicable)
- Relevant documents for a DBS/ID check (passport, driving licence and proof of address (such as a utility bill or bank statement) as well as addresses for the last 5 years). If they have a transferrable DBS, information about this will be needed instead, but driving licence/ID will still need to be seen to confirm identity.
- Verified references who can comment on their suitability for the role.
- Non-Disclosure agreement to enable pre-recruitment activities.

Potential Panel Members are asked to declare all 'unspent' convictions unless the nature of the position being applied for is exempt as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2001 and it is a requirement that an entire criminal record (including spent convictions) is declared. Where applicable, applicants will be given the opportunity at the meeting held, to discuss the subject of any declared offences or other matter and their relativity to the position being sought. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought will lead to the immediate withdrawal of any offer of work.

All individuals are assured that the presence of a criminal record will not necessarily exclude them from employment with AFA. Any criminal background will be assessed by reference to the circumstances and nature of offences and how these relate to the nature of the position.

Following the above having been completed, a period of induction will take place to include panel observation, Data Protection training, discussion regarding role and responsibilities including provision of a handbook and the signing of a Protocol agreement. There is a process of observation of them and feedback for an induction period prior to them being added to the Central List. Information regarding all of this is included within the Panel Protocol and Handbook.

The AFA Panel encourages open and honest feedback from both Panel Members and attendees. If any issues are identified, these will be passed to the Registered Manager and/or Human Resources Manager to consider how best to manage these. Please see below also in relation to the Panel Members role in approval processes.

Safer Recruitment: Foster Carers

AFA will ensure they are compliant with the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011, Standard 13 Recruiting and Assessing Foster Carers who can meet the needs of Looked after Children and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Specific offences being commitment or concerns being expressed about the welfare of a child in relation to an applicant/carer or a member of the person's household means that they would not be seen as suitable to become a Foster Carer. Details can be found in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards Regulation 27.

AFA takes their responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously and as such have a robust process for the assessment and approval of Foster Carers viewing Foster Carers as 'people in positions of trust' and recognising the need to manage safeguarding arrangements as a result. As part of this, our safeguarding practice includes considering parts of potential or existing carers support network who will have ongoing involvement with children.

In recruiting Foster Carers, we will undertake the following:

- Consideration of any formal 'Enquiry to Foster' which includes a screening telephone call during which safeguarding practices are discussed (such as suitability)
- Home visit prior to any application being made, which will include discussion relating to assessment processes and checks required as part of the recruitment process.
- Application Form and ID check form. As part of this form, applicants are asked to declare all 'unspent' convictions unless the nature of the position being applied for is exempt as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2001 and it is a requirement that an entire criminal record (including spent convictions) is declared. Where applicable, applicants will be given the opportunity to discuss any declared offences or other matter and their relativity to the potential role as Foster Carers. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought is likely to mean that the assessment process for carers will cease. All individuals are assured that the presence of a criminal record will not necessarily exclude them from be a carer with AFA. Any criminal background will be assessed by reference to the circumstances and nature of offences and how these relate to the nature of their ability to be carers.
- Relevant documents for a DBS and ID check (passport, driving licence and proof of address such as a utility bill or bank statement, as well as addresses for the last 5 years). Everyone aged 18 or over living in or regularly visiting the household will be asked to complete Disclosure and Barring Service forms and produce the necessary identification.

- Checks with Local Authority Children's Social Care Services in whose area the applicant has lived during the last 10 years. This will include asking for a check to be made as to whether any of the applicant's own children have at any time been subject to a Child Protection Plan. Where applicants have moved to the UK within the last 10 years, checks will be made with the relevant countries for all adults in the household. A check will also be made to ensure that applicants have the right to work in the UK.
- Schools or education establishments
- Information from any Agency where the applicants have previously applied or been approved Foster Carers
- Employment references, including references from any establishments where the applicants have previously worked with children at any stage in their lives. This also includes voluntary work.
- Medical assessment and report, which may highlight safeguarding issues
- Personal references (Details of at least four referees) who will be contacted for a written reference. Subsequently, these references will be verified, with either a visit or telephone call from the assessor.
- References from ex-partners should be obtained where there has been a significant relationship, and particularly when there has been joint parenting of children or if the children in the household are under 18 years at the time of the assessment. References from adult children will also be considered in terms of providing information about previous relationships.

All assessments undergo Quality Assurance processes prior to presentation at the Agency's Panel. The Panel also view all documents and understand their responsibilities regarding safer recruitment of carers. Processes are in place for Panel Members to highlight any safeguarding concerns as soon as they are identified. This is discussed on an ongoing basis through Panel Training and Business days.

For further information regarding assessment and approval processes for Foster Carers, please refer to 'Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Policy'.

DBS Checks

We consider staff, carers and independent workers as 'people in positions of trust' therefore in line with best practice and our own safer recruitment policy we require a DBS check to be undertaken on all of the above at the point of joining and renewed on a regular 3 yearly basis, the below information is to be recorded on the relevant individuals file:

- the date the check was carried out
- the DBS certificate number
- the name of the person who checked the original certificate.
- if using the DBS update service - the name of the person who carried out the update check.
- whether there was any information or concerns arising from the check that required further attention before you decided to appoint the individual.

Ongoing actions to be taken and recorded where appropriate:

- if there were concerns once a person was appointed, how you have re-checked a person's suitability to continue to work with children
- what actions you take if a person changes their role after they have been appointed

- the actions you have taken in order to protect children from contact with unsuitable persons; this may include referral to the DBS or other relevant authorities.

For further information see:

- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Children Act 1989: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4
- Children Act 2004
- National Minimum Standards 2011
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Working together to safeguard children 2018

Connected Policies or Guidance

| Name of Policy / Guidance | Relevant for |
|--|--|
| Foster Carer Handbook | Foster Carers, Placement Managers |
| Placement Managers Guidance | Placement Managers, Senior Managers |
| Equal Opportunities Policy | All staff and Foster Carers |
| Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers | All staff and Foster Carers |
| Recruitment Policy – Staff Handbook | All staff |
| Panel Protocol and Handbook | Panel Members, Agency staff involved in Panel. |

Revised Sept 2019