

Hythe House Support Statement of Purpose



**This statement was last revised 4th November 2021 and
has been formally agreed by the Registered Person**

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COMPANY STATUS & CONSTITUTION ORGANISATION DETAILS

Legal Status: An Independent Fostering Provider
Hythe House Support Ltd –
A Company Limited by Guarantee Company Registration No: 4524983

Directors: Gary Duffy **Agency Head/Responsible Individual**
DMS PGDip, Dip Hyp CS, MHS,
Ad Dip PC, MNCS

Margaret Duffy **Managing Director/Co-Owner**

Robert Duffy **Cert Health & Social Care, PTTLS, BTEC Level 3 PIT**
Archiving, Marketing, GDPR & Social Media

David Duffy **Head of IT, Health & Safety, Archiving, Marketing &**
GDPR

Agency Manager: Tanya Callaway **Diploma in Social Work**
NVQ Level 4 in Management & Leadership
NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People
Diploma in Counselling Children and Adolescents
Diploma in Autism Awareness

Regulations: Hythe House Support operates within the regulations made under sections 22 and 48 of the Care Standard Act (CSA) 2000 and the powers under the Children Act 1989 (s59) & 2004. The Disability and Equality Act 2010. The Human Rights Act 1998, The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

Standards: Hythe House Support follows the National Minimum Standards laid down by the Department of Health under sections 23 and 49 of the CSA 2000. In terms of best practice Hythe House Support follows the UK National Minimum Standards for Foster Care (2011). Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011.

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INTRODUCTION

When I founded Hythe House Support in 2003 I set out to establish an Agency that would offer children and young people a professional, high quality fostering service. However, I also wanted, and continue to want, more than that. My primary goal was to ensure that children are not only provided with care in a safe and homely environment but that this is given by carers who really care about the task of fostering and most importantly about the children who are placed in their homes.

I believe we have achieved this by remaining a relatively small agency that meets its aims and objectives by maintaining a focus on the identified needs of individual children. We aim for all our children to reach their full potential by providing them with quality foster care placements offering them stability, warmth and a safe caring environment with families that meet their individual needs.

I am pleased to introduce this revised Statement of Purpose and hope and trust you will find our services of interest.

Margaret Duffy
Managing Director

Gary Duffy Tanya Callaway
Responsible Individual Agency Manager

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Our main objective is to provide children and young people with a range of services that take into account and strives to meet, their individual needs to provide good outcomes for children. Within this, we are committed to making a real difference to the quality of children's lives by supporting and encouraging them to develop the skills, competencies and knowledge needed to enable them to maximise their full potential that will best equip them for moving forward into their adult life. Children have the right to be looked after by adults who offer them respect, concern, affection, and experiences appropriate to their individual needs.

We expect high standards from our carers although one fundamental basic requirement is that they all have a genuine concern for the well-being and promote good outcomes for the children in their care. It is our aim to ensure that all carers and staff look to turn being fostered into a positive experience for all our children where they can feel equal among their peers and expect respect, their wishes and feelings listened to and consistent care from the adults in their lives.

Adults need to respect the significance for the child in regard to their birth family, their race, culture, religion and their area of origin and promote these to ensure that they are feeling supported to make good choices through to adult life.

To achieve effective and positive outcomes for the children in our care we believe that working together creates a 'team around the child' approach which is absolutely essential. To this end we maintain a small, close-knit, friendly yet wholly professional staff team and body of foster carers who are at one with the ethos of the Agency which is to:

- Protect children from all forms of abuse
- Provide children with sensitive, nurturing, consistent care that sets boundaries and expectations of individual responsibility
- Provide children with services as identified in their care plan
- Provide children and young people with the preparation to enable them to make the transition into adulthood.
- Promote the rights of children and young people
- Provide, where required, skilled therapy for children who have suffered trauma and emotional distress, providing children with a warm caring family environment to develop and thrive
- Provide educational support to meet the individual needs of young people
- Provide young people who have failed to develop secure attachments to do so through the building of trust from adults who provide them with safe, nurturing, and appropriate care
- Equip our foster carers with the necessary practical knowledge, skills and understanding, through ongoing support, supervision, and training in order for them to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which children can achieve; thrive and reach their full potential.
- Recruit, train, and support committed foster carers who can provide high quality parenting, enabling the children in their care the opportunity for stability, security and warmth in a safe environment.

In achieving this, Hythe House Support expects its foster carers to:

- Keep their foster children safe from harm
- Maintain a commitment to the fostering task, ongoing professional development through training.
- Attend training courses, support groups and all meetings
- Keep a daily written record of each child in placement submitted online weekly.
- Keep an up to date health record for each child in their care
- Respect confidentiality at all times regarding information about the child; their family and the agency by following General Data Protection Regulatory expectations.
- Promote birth family contact, respect their race, culture, and religious beliefs.

Foster carers can expect from Hythe House Support:

- Regular support groups provided by Hythe House.
- Individual supervision at regular intervals 4-6 weekly, and fortnightly for less experienced carers or those caring for children with complex needs.
- An 'Open door' policy for all carers, birth families and the young people in our care is available to them all.
- Comprehensive packages of ongoing training with external and internal trainers. Online training packages available for all foster carers.
- Around the clock guidance and support for all carers.
- Support and preparation before taking on a new placement if time allows.
- A generous 28 days' respite package for all our full-time foster carers.
- Practical rewards for a demanding but rewarding job.
- Activity days for the young people, carers and their families.
- Young Persons Forums to enable the young people to share their views which aid us in the growth and development of the company.

The following sections give a synopsis of Hythe House Support's aims and objectives in the particular areas that are listed. Separate policy and procedure exist for these and are contained in both the Staff Manual and Foster Carer's Handbook. Copies of these are available upon request to view.

CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

Hythe House Support recognises its responsibility to treat every child as an individual and will promote and safeguard each young person's welfare in every way. Hythe House Support believes it is vital that all staff and carers involved with the provision of care for children placed with Hythe House Support are alert to the possibility of abuse. In this respect both policy and managerial procedures support the creation of a culture of openness in which the risks are addressed and minimised. There is clear guidance and a written format for reporting/recording any Child Protection or Safeguarding matter to the Child Protection Co-Ordinator in line with national and organisational procedures.

Hythe House Support offers ongoing training in child protection/safeguarding to staff and foster carers.

BULLYING

Bullying in any form is taken very seriously and any situation where it is suspected bullying may be occurring will be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Foster carers are proactive in alerting schools if they suspect a child is subjected to bullying and request the bullying policy of each school.

Foster carers and staff are made aware that Looked After children can be particularly vulnerable to bullying and are issued with both policy and procedure to assist them in this matter. Children are provided with guidance written in their age-appropriate Children's Guide.

COMPLAINTS

Whilst Hythe House Support aims to achieve a high standard in all that it does it also recognises that sometimes those who use our service may be dissatisfied. We have a comprehensive complaints procedure in place, and this is shared with the foster carers and the young people in placement.

If any person using our service considers they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately then we have a procedure to enable them to tell us their concerns and if necessary, they will be investigated by an independent person. The procedure is in two parts, 'Informal' and 'Formal'. We hope wherever possible to be able to satisfy any concerns during the informal part of the process.

There have been no formal complaints regarding foster carers approved by this Agency in the year up to the end of October 2021.

WHISTLEBLOWING

As with complaints, Hythe House Support recognises that despite its efforts to provide a quality service it may, like all organisations, on occasion, fall short in specific areas of practice. Whilst we strongly encourage all workers, carers, customers, and clients to address any issues they may have through our in-house procedures we recognise there may be circumstances when this is not always possible. Where this is the case any person should be aware they have the right to approach the relevant external body- Ofsted (Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD) also in light of any concerns raised in regards to Coronavirus to the Health and Safety Executive where there is a public interest concern, without being penalised for so doing.

STAFF RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

All employees, paid or unpaid, recruited and selected by Hythe House Support are subject to the checks and requirements of Fostering Service Regulations 2011. Before any member of staff commences employment, they will:

- Provide a full employment history
- Be subject to an enhanced DBS check

- Have the authenticity of qualifications and references checked by writing to the awarding body for verification.
- Provide at least two references, one of which will be the last employer.
- Have these references checked, both in writing and by telephone.
- Be subject to a probationary period and a full induction.

PROTECTING & PROMOTING THE HEALTH NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Each child is an individual with differing needs. Carers are committed to meeting and promoting the health and welfare of children and young people in their care and are encouraged to play an active role in educating a young person about alcohol, and other substance misuse, sexual health, risks of sexual exploitation, county lines, gangs and the importance of healthy eating and lifestyle. This became more apparent when the country was placed into lockdown due to the **Coronavirus** outbreak. The carers were kept up to date with Government guidelines and shared these with the young people to ensure the health needs of all within the household was considered.

This is done through encouraging self-care skills and attending all health appointments routine and specialist. Carers are also supported in drawing up a health care plan, in which the involvement of the young person is sought wherever possible and appropriate.

Hythe House Support foster carers will request a health assessment by the previous GP to take place within 7–10 working days of a child being placed. Following this carer will facilitate the attending of appointments to the dentist, opticians, new GP appointment, also assist the allocated Social Worker in the arrangement of the annual health check, with the consent of the young person.

PROMOTING EDUCATION

For many young people in care, attending mainstream education may not be the best option, or in some cases, even possible. Where education has been disrupted, as was the case throughout the Coronavirus outbreak when the carers were required to home school the children for several months. If a child placed has missed a great deal of school, we can provide the support to the local authority social worker and virtual schools to ensure that all young people can access an appropriate education provision to meet their needs on occasions through Zoom/Teams and other social media tools. Our foster carers promote and encourage all young people to maintain education or tuition including college as well as apprentices by being proactive in supporting them with homework, attending parent evenings as well as PEP's and any other meetings held face to face as well as via other virtual means (Zoom, Teams). The promotion of education via alternative routes including home schooling became even more important over the pandemic and carers supported the young people throughout this period.

LEAVING CARE

Those young people who are beyond the statutory school age are supported in finding and attending further education, training courses, apprenticeships, or employment. We work in partnership with local authorities to ensure that individual Pathway Plans and Leaving Care strategies are developed and implemented. The desired outcome is for the young person to learn and develop the skills required for everyday life, to successfully manage the transition to adulthood and to lead a healthy lifestyle. Many carers continue supporting the young people after they have left their care as some do not have anyone else, they can call upon to support them through tough times and this became even more apparent throughout the pandemic, as a move to alternative accommodation was placed on hold to ensure the transitioning period was a smooth one and this continues to be a priority for all carers in their support of young people moving onto adult life.

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND

Anne Longfield OBE is the Children's Commissioner for England since 2015.

"I want all children to have the brightest future possible. I will advocate for positive change for all children and particularly those who are most disadvantaged." – Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England.

The post of Children's Commissioner was created following a recommendation made by Lord Laming in the Victoria Climbié enquiry, Anne promotes and protects children's rights in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and, as appropriate, other human rights legislation and conventions. Anne and her team at the Office of the Children's Commissioner do this by listening to what children and young people say about things that affect them and encouraging adults making decisions to take their views and interests into account.

If you are a child or young person who lives away from home or who receives social care, who needs advice or assistance, you can call us on 02077838330 or on the free phone number 0800 528 0731 or email to info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk. Our line is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Our address is Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

WORKING WITH DIVERSITY

Hythe House Support aims to ensure the ethnic, cultural, and religious needs of all of its young people are identified and promoted both as individuals and within the larger community. Our objective is to enable and empower young people to celebrate their own identity and thus increase their self-esteem. Whilst some young people may choose not to practise the beliefs of their community of origin we nevertheless regard it as important that they are provided with the means to connect, or re-connect, with members of their own ethnic, cultural or religious community and are enabled to make informed choices. The agency recognises that individuals and groups can be unfairly discriminated against and it is our aim to tackle discrimination whilst working in a framework of fairness and openness to extend our commitment to quality of opportunity and take responsibility in relation to this for all staff and young people at Hythe House. All carers are provided with

ongoing training courses to cover subjects including, Attachment, Every Disabled Child Matters, Black Lives Matter; Discrimination-Racism and Intolerance training alongside numerous other subjects to enhance their level of understanding.

Our carers will respect a child's need for privacy and will be sensitive to a child's wish to observe any special religious observances such as prayer times, days of fasting and dietary requirements.

Sadly, only one of our carers could potentially be able to offer a placement to a child with a physical disability who is wheelchair bound due to the structure of their homes. However, our carers can offer placements for children with moderate learning or physical disabilities.

CONTACT WITH FAMILY & SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

It is important that young people are helped to maintain and develop links with family members, and other significant people who are, or have been, important in their lives.

People with whom the child needs to maintain contact with may include parents, siblings, grandparents and other family members, previous foster carers and friends. Hythe House Support, its staff and carers are committed to ensuring that these contacts are facilitated, maintained and promoted wherever this is planned for and identified in the Care Plan, also bearing in mind safeguarding for all concerned. We promote contact via social media routes especially when the country went into lockdown due to Coronavirus and this was promoted via Zoom, Facetime, Teams, WhatsApp to ensure that all young people were still able to see and speak with their family members over this period of time.

PROMOTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION IN THE OPERATION OF HYTHE HOUSE SUPPORT

In order to evaluate the quality of our service we recognise that listening to children and young people is vital (*as quoted in our 'Good' inspection in May 2017*) and will constantly and regularly seek their views regarding all aspects of care that they receive. We seek formal feedback from children and young people through confidential forms completed by them at the time of their CIC Reviews and again at the Foster Carer Annual Home Reviews when they are spoken to by an independent social worker. We also provide them with information about organisations such as Corum Voice, Child Line and Ofsted, as well as their social worker's telephone number, so that they have a range of options if they have any worries or the need to make a complaint. The young people were also given opportunities to have virtual meetings with their LASW, IRO's to ensure that their voices were heard prior to CIC reviews and also if and when they were not happy with decisions being made for them by their foster carers.

They are also given the number of Hythe House and informed about the open-door policy; this is also provided in the Children's guide with the welcome pack which is provided to them on coming into placement at Hythe House. Social workers from Hythe House also go and speak with the young people when they attend their placement on an unannounced visit, as well as on a regular basis when they see their carers for home supervision. This continued virtually over the lockdown periods in 2020/21.

We also hold Young Persons Forums within an activity day to enable young people to share their views on how to help the organisation grow and perform at its best.

Our foster carers actively promote discussion and feedback on the child's routine, activities, and other areas of their lives, these are also shared with the local authority and the independent reviewing officer monthly. Carers keep a daily record on the young people which is emailed on a weekly basis and contributes to the discussion within carers supervision on a 4-6 weekly basis.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT, DISCIPLINE AND DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

Behaviour Management

Hythe House Support has a philosophy of expressing approval and rewarding children for positive behaviour.

The relationship between Hythe House Support, its carers and children are based upon mutual respect and a clear understanding of professional and personal boundaries, which are effective for both the individual and the family.

Carers incorporate methods of managing complex and challenging behaviours into their daily care planning, according to the age and developmental stage of the young person, in consultation with Hythe House Support, LA Social Workers, schools and the team around the child to ensure that everyone is working with the child to create positive change.

Hythe House Support also recognises that unacceptable behaviour is likely to be because of a child's trauma, their emotional and developmental needs and not just an act of wilful defiance to authority but a way of acting out their inner turmoil. This became more apparent throughout the pandemic and the mental health needs associated with the uncertainty of the virus and how this could impact upon the young people was monitored and support offered for the young people to feel safe and secure in their home environment.

Behaviours that cannot go unchallenged are abusive language, violence, damage to property and issues of personal safety and these are dealt with appropriately with de-escalation techniques.

Discipline

Discipline is a set of rules and boundaries that help people to live together giving respect to all individuals within the family. All our foster carers have a Family and an Individual Safer Caring policy which is both specific to their home and drawn up on an individual basis for each child to meet their individual need and explained at a level in line with their capacity and level of understanding.

Sanctions

Sanctions are only used when all other approaches have failed and should not be a form of punishment but as a vehicle to address a child's behaviour. Where possible they relate as a naturally occurring consequence that is more likely to promote genuine change and understanding. The aim is to enable the child to understand the results of their actions, reflecting on how they could have managed situations differently and being creative in ways of attempting to put things right.

De-Escalation Techniques

Hythe House Support ensures all its carers receive appropriate strategies for the de-escalation of inappropriate behaviour. Techniques such as de-fusing and distracting for the safety of the child, others and property is used.

De-escalation refers to any activity that is meant to diffuse a conflict or intense situation. When foster children have blow-ups or outbursts, foster carers must respond in a way that diffuses the situation to ensure safety and calms the young person.

RECORD KEEPING

Hythe House Support recognises the importance of clear and accurate recording, both in order to preserve accurate records of the young person's history, and as a potential source of evidence for investigations and inquiries, that may need to be disclosed in court proceedings. Each carer keeps accurate daily records which are emailed to a secure email at Hythe House whilst adhering to GDPR. This is reviewed and signed off by the supervising social worker on a weekly basis. All records kept by foster carers are stored in a lockable cabinet or in the carers locked bedroom when not in use to ensure confidentiality and general data protection regulations procedures are always adhered to.

THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE

We are fortunate to have very experienced, knowledgeable carers that enables Hythe House Support to offer a wide range of services to meet the individual needs identified in children's care plans aged from birth to 18 years and beyond.

All of our families have an allocated Supervising Social Worker, and it is this Agencies objective to ensure each family is provided with high quality supervision and support which, together with their annual review ensures their continued suitability to foster children for the Agency and the children in their care. We also provide 4-6 weekly group support meetings at Hythe House, alongside an open-door policy for our carers: their families and the young people in our care. Some sessions are also offered virtually as a catch up in the interim, and this was paramount throughout the pandemic to ensure we have a vehicle in place to offer support to the foster carers and the young people when face to face meetings are not possible.

These include:

- Short-term and emergency placements.
- Medium-term placements
- Long-term and permanent placements
- Parent and child placements
- Bridging placements in preparation for permanency
- Solo placements
- Sibling groups

Within these placements our Basic Services include:

- Home finding of suitably trained carers
- The promoting of all healthcare and educational needs
- Working to the Care Plan for each child
- Independence and after-care training
- Daily travel requirements local to the placement
- Individual educational support
- Life Story work in the way of photos and memorabilia whilst the child is in our care

Our Additional Services can include:

- Therapy and Counselling

These additional services are not included in the basic fee but can be built into a regular costing as agreed between Hythe House and the Social Worker either prior to placement commencing or during the placement. Hythe House feels a flexible approach and attitude promotes confidence and ensures ongoing commitment to each child's emotional development and creates good outcomes for all the young people.

Where is Hythe House Support?

The main day-to-day running of the business is managed from Hythe House which is located in the North Kent town of Sittingbourne. This allows us to offer a room to facilitate private specialised therapy sessions and a meeting room for reviews and meetings.

Foster Carers and Placements (All figures are as of the revised date of this statement)

Hythe House Support has foster carers in both urban and rural environments in the North Kent area.

Numbers as of 4th November 2021

Foster Carer Families	15
Children Placed	25

Ethnic Origin	Female	Male
African/Caribbean		
Asian		
UK/European	13	10
Other European		1 (Black British)
Dual Heritage		
Other		1 (British/Afghan)

The number of approved foster carer households is 15 households as of 4th November 2021.

The following local authorities have made placements with Hythe House Support:

Medway, Kent, Bridgend, Hampshire, Trowbridge, Peterborough, Coventry, Wiltshire, Bournemouth, Wokingham, Richmond, Oxfordshire, Southwark, Westminster, Enfield Hillingdon, Bromley, Havering, Ealing, Greenwich, Barnet, Haringey, Lambeth, Hammersmith & Fulham, Barking & Dagenham, Newham, Southampton.

Staffing:

Currently the team consists of:

The Management Team

Managing Director

Margaret Duffy

Maggie was a foster carer for over 25 years, firstly with the local authority for 3 years and over 20 years for two Independent Fostering Agencies. Maggie has fostered children with a variety of behavioural and emotional difficulties over the years and eventually adopted one of these children. Maggie set out to establish an agency that would offer children and young people a professional, high quality fostering service.

IT Manager

David Duffy

David has been involved with fostering for over 25 years as a birth child of foster carers. He has over 18 years' experience working within the private independent fostering sector. David left to help set up Hythe House Support in 2003 where his main responsibilities are to source and maintain the IT infrastructure alongside GDPR, Health & Safety, Archiving and other office duties.

Social Media & Marketing Manager

Robert Duffy

Robert has been involved with fostering for over 25 years as a birth child of foster carers. He worked in the private independent fostering sector, working in an education capacity for over 25 years where he worked with numerous young people with varying degrees of special needs. Robert left to help set up the education provision at Hythe House Support where he had been in the position of Head of Education since its inception in 2003 to closure in 2018. Robert's main responsibilities are GDPR, Archiving, social media and Marketing within the organisation.

Responsible Individual

Gary Duffy - **DMS PGDip, Dip Hyp CS, MHS, Dip PC, MNCS**

Gary's career has also been in the financial sector. Having worked for a large pension fund provider for 7 years, Gary then qualified as an SFA Securities Representative and Futures & Options Representative while working for a stockbroker in Tunbridge Wells. During his time, he progressed to Senior Dealer to a team of 8. In March 2003, he left to help set up Hythe House Support Ltd

and has been registered with Ofsted as the responsible Individual since that date. Gary has over 30 years' management experience, a BTEC National Certificate in Public Administration and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies. Gary has completed a Diploma in Hypnotherapy and an Advanced Diploma in Counselling. He has grown up with fostering as his parents were carers for over 25 years.

Agency Manager

Tanya Callaway - **Diploma in Social Work**
NVQ Level 4 in Management & Leadership,
NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People
Diploma in Counselling Children and Adolescents
Diploma in Autism Awareness

Tanya has over 35 years' experience in a social care setting. She worked as a Residential Social Worker for a Local Authority for approximately 6 years, and during this time she completed her NVQ Level 3 'Caring for Children and Young People'. It was at this stage that she commenced training to become a qualified social worker. Tanya then transferred to the Looked After Children's Team for the following 4 years, over that time Tanya gained experience of working in the Child Protection Team and within the Family Centre setting.

Once qualified in 2005 she moved to the Local Authority Fostering Team for the following 2 years. Tanya has been at Hythe House since November 2007 initially as supervising social worker then progressed onto Agency Manager in January 2014 Tanya is also a registered practitioner with Social Work England.

Professional Staff

Senior Supervising Social Worker

Ronda Jones – Social Work Degree

Ronda qualified with a 2:2 grading in her social worker degree in 2008 and a registered practitioner with Social Work England.

Her placements included working at a secure training centre with young offenders, looked after children's mental health team and also worked with adults with learning disabilities. Ronda has undertaken voluntary work in the community with older people. She has a wealth of experience in working in a variety of settings with the public. Ronda has been supervising social worker at Hythe House since qualifying as a social worker in September 2008.

Supervising Social Worker

Andrea Farrington- MA Social Work, Psychology Degree 2:1

Andrea qualified as social worker in December 2012 and a registered practitioner with Social Work England.

Andrea has experience in her role of Supervising Social Worker, she has provided a high quality level of care and support to foster carers and the looked after children in their care. She possesses an in-depth understanding of relevant fostering legislation and its continuous changes. She also possesses a sound knowledge of social work principles and practices and their application to caseloads.

Administration Staff

Nicola Duffy

Nicola has over 30 years' administration experience, having worked in the West End for 15 years in a Chartered Surveyors as PA to the Senior Partner, as well as providing admin support to a busy team. Nicola joined Hythe House in 2007 and is an important member of the team in both the Social Work and Finance Departments. She is also the Panel co-ordinator and Administrator.

- 1 further Position Vacant at present

Consultants

Lynn Stout

Lynn qualified as a social worker in 1983 and practiced in the London Borough of Redbridge for the following 5 years. Lynn then moved onto Kent County Council as a senior social worker from 1989 through to 1998. Lynn then decided to have a couple of years as an Independent Social Worker. In 2000 Lynn then started to work as a project manager for Futures for Children and completed a variety of tasks with the same company including a director of Children Services until 2015 when Lynn decided to move over to her current role as an Independent Social Worker and Foster Care Consultant.

Independent Social Workers

Lynne Baker

Lynne has over 15 years post qualifying social work experience in Children and Families work, including working as a senior practitioner in Youth Offending, a parenting co-ordinator for several years. Lynne moved into fostering in 2015 and held a position with KCC until deciding to go independent in 2016.

Stephanie Hobbs

Stephanie qualified as a social worker in 2005 and has worked in social care since 1994 initially in day services for adults with disabilities. After qualifying as a social worker, she progressed to working in care management within the local authority, the last three years working with young people in transition. In 2011 Stephanie was employed as a social worker within the Shared Lives Team where she carried out in depth assessments on potential carers and supervised current carers in their fostering task. Stephanie was a supervising social worker at Hythe House from August 2013 to June 2019. Therefore, from July 2019 Stephanie made a decision to semi retire and undertake assessment/panel work as an independent social worker.

Jane Baker-Davies

Jane qualified as Home Economics teacher in 1981. I taught for 2 years before entering into social services. In 1988 I fully qualified as a social worker and held many positions within Kent and then Medway Council in Adult and Children Services. In 1992 I worked within Adult Services, however in 1997 I decided to remain in Children's services as a Fostering Social Worker until 2015. I have also been a Kent registered foster carer since 2005 alongside working part time as a fostering social worker up until I decided to retire from full time work and move onto offering independent services alongside my fostering children full time.

I am a registered Social Worker with Social Work England with over 30 years' experience, with more than 20 of these in specialist fostering services.

Therapists

Stuart is a BA (Hons) Post Graduate Dip, Counselling Diploma & MBACP (Accred) and a UKRCP Registered Independent Counsellor/Psychotherapist and Accredited member of BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy).

Peggy is a UKCP registered Adult and Child psychotherapist, she is also a BACP accredited counsellor, and a social worker registered with the HCPC. Her specialism has been across mental health and services to children and families

Our independent therapists Stuart and Peggy are also an inclusive part of our team at Hythe House, they offer advice and support to the staff team and carers as well as sessional work with the young people. They have adopted an approach to their work with the children, which covers many mediums including talking, play, art and sand tray work to enable the young people to express themselves. These sessions are focused and led around the young person's needs and can take a variety of different forms from more formal one to one session to a creative play-based session.

In line with attachment theory and resilience the therapists focus on creating a secure base for all young people placed with us through demonstrating best practice combined with therapy, and a variety of activities throughout those sessions. Therefore, they aim to achieve a working relationship with the young person working upon behaviour modification paired with a nurturing approach helping them to work through their trauma and reach their true potential.

NB A chart detailing the Organisational Structure can be found at Appendix 1.

CRITERIA FOR PLACEMENT

Planned Placements

Planned admissions into our foster carers' homes are the best way for a child or young person to be introduced to Hythe House Support. The management team has shared responsibility to consider all referrals, prioritise cases, and plan placements that meet the young person's needs as closely as possible. Serious consideration is given, during the process of exchanging information, to our ability to meet the needs of a young person. This includes our ability to be able to support young people in maintaining and enhancing their racial, cultural, social, and religious links. Over the Coronavirus pandemic and beyond we ensured via risk management that all young people and anyone they may have come into contact with had not had any symptoms of the virus to ensure that we are not transferring the virus between households.

We believe that carefully planned moves are good practice, are less traumatic for the young person, and contribute substantially to the likelihood of a successful placement. With this in mind, we endeavour to support careful introductions, even where the young person is currently living far away. This may include our carers travelling to meet the young person in their current placement if appropriate to do so, recognising that in familiar surroundings they are likely to feel most at ease.

Emergencies

There are times when circumstances are such that a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm or where a placement has irretrievably disrupted, and thus may require a move to a new and appropriate placement as a matter of urgency. We are willing to look at each case on its own merit, and subject to availability can accept same-day placements as long as there is sufficient information shared for matching purposes, which would also include a risk assessment to confirm that they are not/have not displayed any symptoms of Coronavirus. We will not want to move young people into placements late at night as this can cause undue stress and trauma for young people to be moved in this way and does not enable Hythe House to risk manage these types of placements appropriately.

Documentation

In order for us as an organisation to make an informed decision about placement it is vital that we have the following information.

- Chronology
- Fully completed Risk Assessment; including Covid 19 risk assessments.
- Full background/historical information
- Current Care Plan and last CIC review minutes.
- Any previous assessments, e.g. psychological/psychiatric, educational, medical, reviews, current school reports, reports from current carers.
- Up to date and a full referral inclusive of previous placements, education, health and family information.
- Signed Delegated Consent.
- Birth family details

Once a placement has been agreed we will also need: -

If a Placement Planning Meeting was not able to take place before placement commenced, this must be arranged within the first 5 days of placement with the LASW.

- Copy of the child's/children's birth certificate, passport and medical registration card and signed delegated consent.
- Copy of any court orders (e.g. Care Orders, No Contact Orders)
- Copies of all court statements and judgement in legal proceedings (permission of the court will usually need to be obtained)
- Details of existing contact arrangements and care plans.
- Copy of the placing authority's Complaints and Child Protection procedures
- Signed contract, with financial details for invoicing
- A statement, drawn up at the planning meeting of the work that the Local Authority and Hythe House Support have agreed should be undertaken, and the projected length of the placement.

Following admission

Within 7 days the LASW to visit the young person in placement. Within four weeks of the placement a planning meeting and the child's statutory review to be held, and thereafter at 3 months and 6 monthly intervals.

Admission criteria

The age range for admission is from birth to 18 years (with the exception of a parent and child placement where the mother's age has no upper limit but is considered for each referral.) Following a referral by the local authority, we will make an assessment of our ability to meet the child's needs (or parent and child's needs) taking into consideration the children in placement and the information from the Local authority.

We are committed to not excluding a young person from Hythe House Support because they exhibit difficult behaviour. We encourage our carers to actively promote change through behavioural and social programmes and have a thorough understanding "the needs behind the behaviour" for each child by providing ongoing training to our carers.

We do however consider that young people who display the following characteristics are not appropriately placed in a family until they have begun to understand their own responsibility for this behaviour and are committed to change, with our support.

Any behaviour that puts others in the family or community at serious and unacceptable risk: e.g.

- Serious or repeated physical violence towards others in family or community
- Arson/fire setting where lives are potentially put at risk
- Serious / compulsive sexual assaults

- A young person who is frequently out of touch with reality through reliance on alcohol or drugs or as a manifestation of a psychiatric condition that in adults might be diagnosed as psychosis or schizophrenia.
- A child who requires regular restraint as a form of control would not be suitable for a foster family at Hythe House.
- At significant risk of self-harm, where 24-hour monitoring is required to safeguard the young person's and others' welfare.

FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING & SUPPORT

Recruitment

Before undertaking any assessment of a potential foster carer there is a process which allows both the applicant and the Agency to decide if fostering is the right path for them to follow. Following an enquiry or response to an advertisement a member of the social work team will:

*Flow Chart- Telephone enquiry- Information pack - Home visit -DBS, LA and health checks undertaken- Skills to Foster Training undertaken – Form F Assessment Commences- Personal and employment references completed – Completed Form F presented to panel- Approval Decision sent to Decision Maker- Outcome of approval to foster.

- Contact the prospective applicant(s) and obtain basic information from them to see whether they meet the minimum criteria we set e.g. room available for fostering etc and it is also an opportunity for staff to address any queries and questions about fostering or the organisation that they may have.
- An Information Pack is then sent out which contains our brochure detailing information about the Agency, its services, the assessment process and fees and allowances.
- Upon receipt of a completed Application Form a phone call will be made to set up a home visit to the applicant(s) where they can learn more about the fostering task and be introduced to the aims and objectives of Hythe House Support.
- A home visit will take place with the Agency Head and Agency Manager, where the assessment process is discussed. The applicant(s) will then be given a couple of weeks to consider whether they wish to continue with their application.
- Following this meeting, should the applicant(s) and Hythe House wish to proceed further, then an invitation to the next available "Skills to Foster" course will be sent. This is a training course designed by Fostering Network and aimed at providing further information on the fostering task, the children, their families and other professionals involved in their care. The course is led by social workers and the agency manager and provides applicants with the opportunity to find out what fostering is "really like".
- Running alongside the 'Skills to Foster' course those applicants are provided with AH Medical Forms and are asked to complete Consent Forms for all statutory checks, including Enhanced DBS checks, Ofsted, local authority and references. Any potential difficulties in the assessment are also discussed at this meeting.

- The application will then be allocated by the Manager for a Form F Assessment to be completed by a qualified independent social worker.

Assessment

We believe that the rigorous selection of carers is our foundation to robust placements. All of our approved carers will have undertaken a thorough assessment. This includes:

- Once the prospective carer is allocated to the worker, they visit the applicant at their home for a series of meetings. This is a minimum of six visits of at least two hours each. The purpose of these meetings is to talk with them and other members of their family about their household and lifestyle.
- This information is recorded on the Form F together with “evidence” of their ability and suitability to foster.
- At the same time as the Form F assessment is progressing, a Health & Safety assessment is carried out along with the completion of statutory checks and at least three personal references plus an employment reference. The applicant(s) will also be asked to undergo a medical with their GP and the completed AH Form will have been forwarded to the Agency’s Medical Advisor for a health assessment and any recommendations recorded.
- On completion of the Form F, all satisfactory statutory checks and medical reports the assessment is presented to Hythe House Support’s Independent Fostering Panel.
- Hythe House Support holds a Fostering Panel at least four times per year. These are chaired by an independent person who is assisted by a number of professionals from a variety of disciplines. We also have independent people who have experience of caring for children in a number of situations including a current foster carer from another organisation; a former looked after child.
- The applicants then attend our Fostering Panel and in keeping with our belief that fostering involves the whole family, the children of applicants are invited to attend part of the panel meeting if appropriate to do so.

The Fostering Panel will determine the suitability of applicants and the circumstances of their approval as Foster Carers and will then make their recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, who is an independent senior social worker, with at least 3 years post-qualifying experience in child care social work, and has knowledge of child care law and practice (standard 23.12).

Foster Carer Home Annual Reviews

All foster carers are reviewed, in line with Fostering Services Regulations 2011, (Regulation 29), and the Home Review Policy of the Agency, on an annual basis, unless there is a change of circumstances that necessitate earlier; or an outbreak of Coronavirus prevents panels being held. As well as consulting with the foster carers, enquiries are made with local authorities, any young people in placement, their families and the foster family, as to their suitability to continue as foster carers or for any changes to their approval as considered necessary.

All annual reviews are referred to the Fostering Panel for consideration. The process changed throughout the lockdown period in 2020 due to the risks associated with holding face to face panels. However, all reviews were submitted to the panel chair who in turn spoke with carers, ISW's and SSW to ensure that all information was correctly recorded, and this was then ratified by the ADM.

Health & Safety audits and risk assessments are carried out annually with all statutory checks renewed on a three-yearly basis to include Local Authority Checks.

Support

Hythe House Support is committed, in line with its Philosophy of Care, to providing its foster carers with a high level of support. The following services are offered to our foster carers:

- Regular Support Visits – Foster carers receive regular support visits at a level agreed with them according to the needs and demands of the child(ren) placed.
- Support Groups - Foster carers attend 4-6 weekly group meetings, which offer peer support, as well as support from the workers present.
- Male Support Groups are also offered in the evenings to enable the hard-to-reach carers an opportunity to attend
- Out of Hours Support – a telephone support service is available to foster carers outside of office hour seven days a week including Bank Holidays.
- Annual Leave/Respite Care - Carers are entitled to up to 28 days paid annual leave/respice per year (pro rata).
- Throughout the pandemic carers received virtual supervisions, and all staff members were still available for support and guidance throughout this process albeit from home working. If an emergency or child protection concern were to arise then home visits will take place.

Supervision

Hythe House Support recognises the effective supervision of foster carers is important to promoting good standards of practice. Each foster carer is allocated a named, qualified, Supervising Social Worker and this worker will visit carers every four-six weeks. Additional visits are arranged as and when the need is identified or required as well as an open-door policy for support and guidance is in place for all foster carers. Throughout the pandemic carers received virtual supervisions, and all staff members were still available for support and guidance throughout this process albeit from home working. If an emergency or child protection concern were to arise then home visits will take place.

Training

Hythe House Support believes the needs of children are better met and their welfare protected where carers are provided with appropriate training. To this end Hythe House Support is committed to the development of its foster carers through the provision of a comprehensive training programme that includes courses provided by both internal and external trainers. All of our carers have completed the (formally) CWDC now the TSDS, portfolio. Anyone to join Hythe House who would be in the process of completing it are supported with this, by offering them workshops. Hythe House have also offered all carers evening support groups and on-line training programmes to enable all carers to full fill their obligation as carers to progress their development and skills in caring for young people. Carers are also encouraged to seek bespoke courses to meet the changing needs of the children in their care to enhance their care of the children through a greater level of understanding of the child's individual needs.

Throughout the pandemic and the Government lockdown requirements, this prevented Hythe House providing face to face training. Therefore, all carers had access to the online training material and were required to complete courses online over this period throughout 2020 and beginning of 2021. As from September 2021 face to face training recommenced.

Organisational Structure

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Margaret Duffy

DIRECTORS

Agency Head Responsible Individual	Head of IT Health & Safety Marketing & GDPR	Head of Marketing, GDPR & Social Media
Gary Duffy	David Duffy	Robert Duffy

Agency Manager
Tanya Callaway

Senior Supervising Social Worker
Ronda Jones

Supervising Social Worker
Andrea Farrington

Administration Support	
Social Work/ Business Development/finance	Social Work Department
(Senior) Nicola Duffy	Vacant