# **Case Study - Fostering Solutions**

## Profile

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Company Name: | [Fostering Solutions](http://www.fosteringsolutions.com/) |
| Website: | [www.fosteringsolutions.com](http://www.fosteringsolutions.com/) |
| Business Sector: | Private |
| Postal Address: | Head OfficeFostering SolutionsMerchant’s Place1 River StreetBolton |
| Postcode: | BL2 1BX |
| Fleet Size Overall: | 67 |
| HGV: | 0 |
| LGV: | 0 |
| Company Cars: | 67 |
| Private vehicles used for business purposes: | 60 within regional offices 801 foster carers using own vehicles |

## Company Overview

[**Fostering Solutions**](http://www.fosteringsolutions.com/contact-us/request-a-fostering-information-pack/?gclid=COqf2ITXicUCFYnKtAodRk4AGw)was established in Bolton in June 2000. During the following years, offices were opened in Yorkshire, North East England, the Midlands and North Wales. It is an independent foster care agency committed to ensuring the children and young people in its care enjoy the highest quality service and child care practice. The regional offices ensure that Foster Carershave access to 24 hours a day, 365 days a year support and that placing authorities have regional contacts with local knowledge.

In February 2006 [**Fostering Solution**s](http://www.fosteringsolutions.com/contact-us/request-a-fostering-information-pack/?gclid=COqf2ITXicUCFYnKtAodRk4AGw)became part of Acorn Care and Education and has since opened offices in Edinburgh, South Wales, London, Norwich, Banbury, Peterborough, Southampton and Beverley.

There are thousands of children requiring foster care across the United Kingdom and **Fostering Solutions** aims to help reduce this foster care shortage. It recruits assesses, trains and supports its Foster Carers to provide high quality foster care placements.

[**Fostering Solutions**](http://www.fosteringsolutions.com/contact-us/request-a-fostering-information-pack/?gclid=COqf2ITXicUCFYnKtAodRk4AGw)carers really make a difference to a young person's life.

## Nature of Operation and Driving Activities

The Directors and Senior Management Team of **Fostering Solutions** ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to meet the complex responsibilities they face under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

These responsibilities cover its employees and others, including Foster Carers; children placed by the agency; visitors; contractors; and members of the public, who may be affected by its activities. **Fostering Solutions** recognises that the management of its health and safety responsibilities is a fundamental part of the effective and efficient management of the whole organisation.

The Director and Senior Management Team at **Fostering Solutions** accept that legislation defines minimum standards and strive to ensure that the organisation achieves a higher level of performance where reasonably practical. As a result, their approach to the management of health and safety issues is systematic and the**Fostering Solutions** Health and Safety Policy clearly defines areas of responsibility, standards and individual responsibilities for meeting them.

The use of vehicles is covered under a separate section within the **Fostering Solutions**Health and Safety Policy document. In addition, it is quite clear that all the management processes described within the policy take the use of vehicles into account.

In summary, this policy document lays down the top level guidance as follows:

* All vehicles, private or leased, driven on behalf of **Fostering Solutions** must be maintained in a safe condition.
* It is the responsibility of the driver of the vehicle to ensure that it is maintained in a safe condition and that any defects are reported and repaired.
* All accidents must be reported in accordance with the **Fostering Solutions** Accident Reporting Procedure.
* Annual driver licence checks are carried out for all **Fostering Solutions** staff driving on behalf of the operation.
* When a member of staff uses their own vehicle and is in receipt of the company car allowance or fuel allowance, an annual check is also carried out to ensure that the insurance; MOT certificate; driving licence; and log book are kept up to date. Insurance must include business use cover and a valid taxation certificate is to be displayed.

Detailed policy for the use of vehicles is covered in the **Fostering Solutions** Driving for Work Policy. **Fostering Solutions** staff driving activities include:

* Travel to and from **Fostering Solutions** regional offices and Local Authorities throughout the United Kingdom.
* Regular visits to the homes of Foster Carers.

**Fostering Solutions** carer driving activities include:

* Travel to and from local regional offices and training venues.
* Attending meetings and reviews at various locations.
* Travel to and from school.

## Organisational Structure


The Director of Operationsat **Fostering Solutions** has primary responsibility for ensuring the provision of effective safety management systems and establishing strategies to ensure the effective integration of health and safety into all activities within the organisation. The **Fostering Solutions** management systems ensure compliance with all health and safety procedures and implement supervision and training for staff in all areas of safety. In addition, they ensure that appropriate health and safety training is given toFoster Carers.

**Fostering Solutions** ensures that all its employees and Foster Carers are fully involved in carrying out its safety policies in the execution of their individual duties. In addition, full employee participation in the consultation process is encouraged together with representation on the Health & Safety Committee.

## Work related Road Safety Policy and Procedures

Each **Fostering Solutions** Regional Manager has the overall responsibility for managing the work related road safety policies and procedures at the point of delivery.

The **Fostering Solutions**Driving for Work policy provides clear information to all members of staff who drive for work on a frequent or infrequent basis. It applies to both company vehicles and private vehicles being driven on company business. The policy is focussed on the management of risk and provides additional, more detailed information to cover specific areas of vehicle use which are identified in the **Fostering Solutions** Health and Safety Policy document.

The**Fostering Solutions**Driving for Work policy is supported by supplementary information handouts which include:

* A detailed and informative Driver Handbook.
* Guidance on Driving for Work Risk Assessments.
* Guidance on how to check driving documentation including the various forms of driving licences; insurance certificates and road tax discs.

**Policy for the Procurement of Vehicles**

**Fostering Solutions**takes the safety of its employees seriously. The Senior Management team selects company cars on the grounds of safety and environmental performance. The current Company cars are ***Renault Méganes***. The procurement decisions were made on the following performance criteria:

* **EuroNCAP**. The Renault Mégane II achieved 5/5 stars from Euro NCAP front and side impact tests and 2/4 stars for pedestrian rating. Basic models come with front and lateral, driver and passenger airbags, ABS anti-lock brakes with EBD (electronic brake-force distribution) and Brake Assist as standard, plus deadlocking for the doors.
* **Environmental Factors**. Built in an ISO 14001 certified factory, the new Renault Mégane Hatchis in perfect keeping with the Renault policy of sustainable development. Its naturally eco-friendly engines - three of which produce CO2 emissions below 140g/km - combine performance, economy and ultimate respect for the environment.
* **Driver Factors.** **Fostering Solutions** have found the overall size of the Renault Mégane to be reasonable and the car provides all round visibility.



Image above:
Example of current **Fostering Solutions** Renault Mégane fleet

## Work related Road Safety Guidance for Drivers

**Driver Handbook**

The **Fostering Solutions**Driver Handbook is a user friendly and easy to read document. It is an industry leader in its category. It begins with a reminder to the driver of the importance of eye sight and the need to comply with the legal requirements. It covers the following information in an informative and educative manner and builds a desire to learn:

* Speeding, including national speed limits and stopping distances.
* Journey planning.
* Tiredness and fatigue.
* Seat belt safety. The legal requirements for seat belts for children are carefully and clearly explained.
* The use of Head Rests and Air Bags.
* The use of Mobile Phones.
* Personal Safety.
* Driving alone - how to deal with incidents.
* Vehicle Maintenance.
* Wheel Changing.
* Vehicle Security.
* Coping with Severe Weather Conditions.
* Parking at Night.
* Actions in the event of a vehicle breakdown.
* Actions in the event of an incident.
* First Aid.
* Taking the vehicle abroad.
* The Options for further Driver Training.
* Incident Recording Sheet.

**Foster Carers**

**Fostering Solutions**recognise that Foster Carers transport children and young people placed in their care in their private vehicles whether on a frequent or infrequent basis. The **Fostering Solutions**Driving Policy Foster Carers has been developed to provideFoster Carerswith clear information about the implications of transporting the children and young people in their care and to assist them with risk awareness.

**Fostering Solutions** currently check all Foster Carercar documentation annually. The details are recorded in the General Risk Assessment which is carried out on the homesof their Foster Carers. In addition, allFoster Carers are required to ensure that their vehicles are fitted with a car seat or booster appropriate for the age of their charge and that these meet British standards and are fitted correctly in their vehicle.

**Fostering Solutions** has recently introduced its new Driving Policy for Foster Carers. The aim of this new policy is:

To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that any child or young person travelling with Foster Carers in private vehicles are protected from risks to their health and safety.

This is part of an on-going process for validating and formalising its procedures for managing the safety implications of driving for work. In addition, a process to allow Foster Carersto notify the company of a road traffic offence or accident involving a Foster Carer has also has been put in place. **Fostering Solutions**intend to incorporate instruction on how to manage risks and drive safely in the initial training for Foster Carers as part of the **Fostering Solutions** Introductory Health and Safety Course for Foster Carers. Foster Carertraining is an ongoing process and each Foster Carerreceives additional training once every 3 years.

The Driving Policy Foster Carers provides clear and easily understandable information on:

* The need for Foster Carersto comply with existing road traffic law including road tax and driving licence requirements.
* The maintenance standards required for their vehicles.
* The insurance cover required for their vehicles.
* The importance of the use of seat belts.
* The use of mobile phones in vehicles.
* The procedure for reporting accidents.
* The importance of the awareness of risk management during journeys.
* The importance of the Foster Carer driver meeting the health standards for driving including eyesight.

## ****Specific examples of procedures****

**Mobile Phones**

The requirement for certain employees to be readily contactable by phone during their period of duty has meant that **Fostering Solutions**has clearly defined its policy on the use of mobile phones in vehicles. This policy is given in its Driving for Work policy and repeated in greater detail in the Driver Handbook.

The legal position on the use of a mobile phone in a vehicle is clearly explained. No **Fostering Solutions** employee should use a mobile phone whilst in the driving seat of a vehicle when the engine is running.

The operation of a hands free mobile phone is also covered. **Fostering Solutions** require the employee to consider the prevailing road conditions, including weather and traffic in deciding whether to use the mobile phone. If the mobile phone is used under these circumstances, the employee is required to consider the duration of the conversation and other options which might offer safer solutions.

**Travelling Alone**

**Fostering Solutions** lays down a clear policy that Risk Assessments are necessary when Supervising Social Workers or other staff work alone. Every Supervising Social Worker is expected to complete and keep up to date a movement sheet detailing their whereabouts whilst working for the organisation. The eMail system is also used to log movements of Supervising Social Workers. Evening visits must be communicated and logged as soon as they are booked. Further guidance is covered in the **Fostering Solutions** Lone Working Policy.

## Auditing and review

The **Fostering Solutions** Health and Safety policy defines the auditing and review process and the procedures for conducting this process within the company. These procedures are carried out under the supervision of the **Fostering Solutions** Director of Operations.

* Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring risk assessments are carried out and that health and safety policies and procedures are carried out in accordance with company policy.
* Line Managers are responsible for identifying and reacting to failures of equipment and to concerns about health and safety. They are also responsible for ensuring that all employees adhere to safe systems of work.
* Employees are reminded of their personal responsibilities for acting safely and complying with and actively implementing **Fostering Solutions** policies and procedures at all times.

The **Fostering Solutions** Health and Safety Committee meets at least every six months. Its representation is drawn from all areas of the organisation. Its minutes are displayed on the **Fostering Solutions** Intranet and on all notice boards. This committee is accountable to the **Fostering Solutions**Senior Management Team and reports on a regular basis making recommendations with regard to corporate health and safety policy and the development and implementation of policies and procedures. In addition, other means of consultative communication are available through the **Fostering Solutions**Staff Monthly Newsletter; the **Fostering Solutions**Foster Carers Quarterly Newsletter; and **Fostering Solutions** Notice Boards.

## Performance measures

**Fostering Solutions**lays down a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) against which it compares its activities on a year on year basis. These are:

* Total number of car accidents per year.
* Cost of accident claims per year. Information on the costs of accidents is dealt with directly by the insurers for **Fostering Solutions**and is not readily available to the Fleet Manager.
* Insurance costs. As long as the incident rate is below a set target year on year, there is no increase to the insurance premiums. This has been the case over the past 3 years.
* Total number of traffic offences per year.

**Car Accidents by Financial Year**

**Fostering Solutions**performance in terms of car accidents in the past 4 Financial Years is as follows:

2006-2007 - 3
2007-2008 - 5
2008-2009 - 3
2009- 2010 - 9
2010-2011 - 6
2011 - 2012 March 1 to date

It is important to note that in the first 3 Financial Years shown above, all the car accidents were due to third parties and no blame or fault was attributable to any of the **Fostering Solutions** drivers involved. The incidents in Financial Year 2009-2010 were all as a result of skids during the period of the adverse weather conditions in 2010-2011. September 2011 to date there has been only one car crash were a lorry hit one of our vehicles onto a coned area of the motorway

**Fostering Solution**s policy states that staff members are not to drive in adverse conditions, certain travel commitments cannot be avoided. **Fostering Solutions** staff members do not drive in adverse weather conditions unless absolutely necessary but in the event of emergencies involving children they have little choice but so to do. **Fostering Solutions** continually review policies in place and since the recent adverse weather conditions guidance on driving in adverse weather has now been incorporated into the Driving for Work policy.

**Fostering Solutions** does not split fuel and mileage expenses between company cars and personal cars in the accounts. The average costs for each financial year are as follows:

* Fuel/Mileage Costs - £80,000 per annum.
* Repair/Servicing Costs - £30,000 per annum.

The business mileage driven by company car drivers varies from person to person but the **Fostering Solutions**average is 10k miles per driver per annum.

## Accident reduction

**Fostering Solutions**has a very low traffic accident rate. The introduction of new policies and procedures to include the grey fleet is a further step in ensuring the safe travel for its staff, Foster Carersand children.

**Fostering Solutions**has been able to keep the number of incidents affecting its drivers and fleet to a very low rate because of the following measures:

* **Fostering Solutions** expect all staff to report all accidents and near misses. As a result of this culture, full investigations of all incidents are undertaken to identify the factors which increase the risk to personnel. Any corrective actions required are then disseminated through internal **Fostering Solutions** communication links. Implementation and monitoring follows on a regional level.
* Training is carried out on a regular basis for all staff and carers.
* Visual warning posters are displayed in each regional office.
* Advice from external sources is actively sought.
* All **Fostering Solutions**vehicles are maintained on a regular basis and approved servicing and maintenance schedules are followed.
* All staff are updated on any new legislation affecting driving for work.

**Fostering Solutions**staff members are required to report all traffic offences. Company records show that the number of traffic offences (almost exclusively either speeding or parking offences) vary between 3-8 offences per year across the company as a whole.

## Financial and other benefits

**Fostering Solutions**has identified the following as the main benefits it enjoys as the result of effectively managing its staff who drive for work:

* A reduction in annual insurance premiums - the insurers are able to confirm that insurance costs for the company are reducing. There is no increase year on year to insurance costs provided the company maintains accident below a set target.
* A reduction in absenteeism.
* An improvement to staff morale.

More important, has been developing a culture of internal communication on road safety within the company. Effective communication of road risk policy, procedures and new processes through existing management structures and communication channels is now an essential part of **Fostering Solutions**management ethos.

## Lessons learned

**Fostering Solutions** has identified one key lesson in regards to the management of at work drivers. This is the impact of the introduction of driver training into the well-established **Fostering Solutions**Health & Safety training.

Staff and Foster Carers alike have welcomed the training package. Participation in the training package enables them to ask questions about at-work driving issues they may not previously have had the opportunity to discuss. In particular, their awareness of their responsibilities and of the risks associated with the use of vehicles improves significantly. Social workers and Foster Carers are by nature, responsible and self disciplined people. The training package provides them with information on which they are able to reassess how they might be able better to carry out their driving activities more safely. A significant benefit of the package is that they also grow to understand that **Fostering Solutions** is keen to carry out its Duty of Care responsibilities seriously and that they are the primary beneficiaries of this.

## Current and future developments

**Fostering Solutions** is keen to pursue the following agendas:

* Encourage and improve driver efficiency in order to benefit economically and environmentally.
* Continue to monitor and review the driving for work policy to ensure all requirements under legislation are met.

## Additional Information

**Fostering Solutions**have provided RoadSafe with the following documentation:

A. Welcome to **Fostering Solutions** - An introduction to all newly appointed Foster Carers.

B. **Fostering Solutions**Health and Safety Policy.

C. **Fostering Solutions** Driving for Work Policy.

D. **Fostering Solutions** Driver Handbook.

E. **Fostering Solutions**Driving Policy Foster Carers.

F. **Fostering Solutions** Road Traffic Offence or Accident Notification Form.