



Action for Children Statement of Purpose

Service: Fostering South East

Date: 25/05/202

Registered: Independent Fostering Agency

Registration Body: Ofsted

Registration Number: SC038534



Contents

Section 1: Introduction	Page
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Legal Framework- Action for Children status and constitution- Aims, objectives and outcomes	3 - 6
Section 2: Service Registration Details	7
Section 3: Service staff structure	8 - 11
Section 4: Services provided	11 - 14
Section 5: Recruitment, approval, review and support for foster carers	15 - 16
Section 6: Monitoring and evaluation	17
Section 7: Complaints, allegations and whistleblowing	17 - 19
Section 8: Regulation and inspection of services	19 - 20

Introduction

Legal Framework

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with regulations, statutory guidance and National Minimum Standards as applying to fostering providers, including:

- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; Regulation 3 and Regulation 4
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011); Standard 16
- The Care Planning Placement and Case Reviews and Fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 govern the work of fostering providers throughout England.

As part of the regulatory requirement, a copy of the Statement of Purpose will be provided to Ofsted and will be placed on Action for Children's website. The document is also available on request to; staff, Placing Authorities, foster carers, prospective foster carers, children and young people.

This Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with these requirements and will be a useful source of information to Action for Children's staff, foster carers and prospective foster carers, children and young people who are placed with the fostering service, and also to colleagues from other agencies.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and at least annually.

Action for Children's status and constitution

Action for Children, the children's charity, Registered Charity No. 1097940, protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives. for Children has a network of projects around the UK.

Action for Children is an established and well-known provider of Fostering Services, who deliver a wide range of high quality, successful foster placements, which both meet and exceed the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and 2013.

Our Vision

Every child and young person in the country has a safe and happy childhood and the foundations they need to thrive.

Our Mission

We protect and support children and young people by:

- Providing practical and emotional care and support
- Ensuring their voices are heard.
- Campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

Our Values

We are:

Passionate about all children having a safe and happy childhood.

Ambitious for children and young people

Collaborative – internally and externally with other organisations to get the best outcomes for children.

Inclusive – we strive to ensure all children are included. We don't ask "if?" We ask "how?"

The Head of Fostering & Adoption (England) is Colette Ferns

Head Office

Action for Children
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford
WD18 8AG

Tel: 01923 361 500

Aims, objectives and outcomes

Aims

We aim to ensure that children and young people are supported to thrive and develop a positive sense of identity, self-esteem and resilience through matching them with foster carers who have the skills and qualities to meet their needs and are aspirational on their behalf.

Objectives and Outcomes

1. To deliver services that recognise and build on the strengths of children and young people from all cultures and religious backgrounds, ensuring the care provided meets their needs and enables them to achieve their potential.
2. To ensure that when children and young people are placed with foster carers, their identity including contact and ties with their birth family members are preserved and valued.
3. To deliver a regulatory compliant, responsive, supportive, professional 24 hour service for foster carers, looked after children and local authority partners.
4. To recruit, assess, support and train carers from diverse backgrounds, ensuring a choice of positive placement options for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families.
5. To support and prepare young people for the challenging transition into adulthood and independent living.
6. To ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse, harm and neglect.
7. To work effectively and collaboratively with other professionals and agencies to ensure comprehensive and co-ordinated services for children, young people and their families
8. To promote the health, personal care and developmental needs of all children and young people in foster care placements.
9. To promote educational attainment, progress and the school attendance of all children and young people in foster care placements.
10. To provide information about our services to all children, young people and families in ways that are appropriate to them.
11. To enable children and young people to feel engaged and to participate in shaping and developing our service.
12. To keep children and young people's wellbeing, happiness and quality of life at the centre of our practice and decision making.

13. To ensure we maintain a robust, experienced fostering Panel which operates within the legislative and regulatory parameters in relation to approving and reviewing carers, considering Standards of Care reports, etc.

14. To recruit, retain and develop committed, appropriately qualified and experienced staff and provide opportunities for ongoing training and development.

Service Registration Details

Name and address of the Registered Provider

Action for Children

10 Great Queen Street
London
WC2B 5DG

Tel: 01329 666930

E-mail: ReferralsSouth@actionforchildren.org.uk

Out of Hours: 01642 226 372

Responsible Individual: Colette Ferns, Head of Fostering & Adoption England

Address: 3 the Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

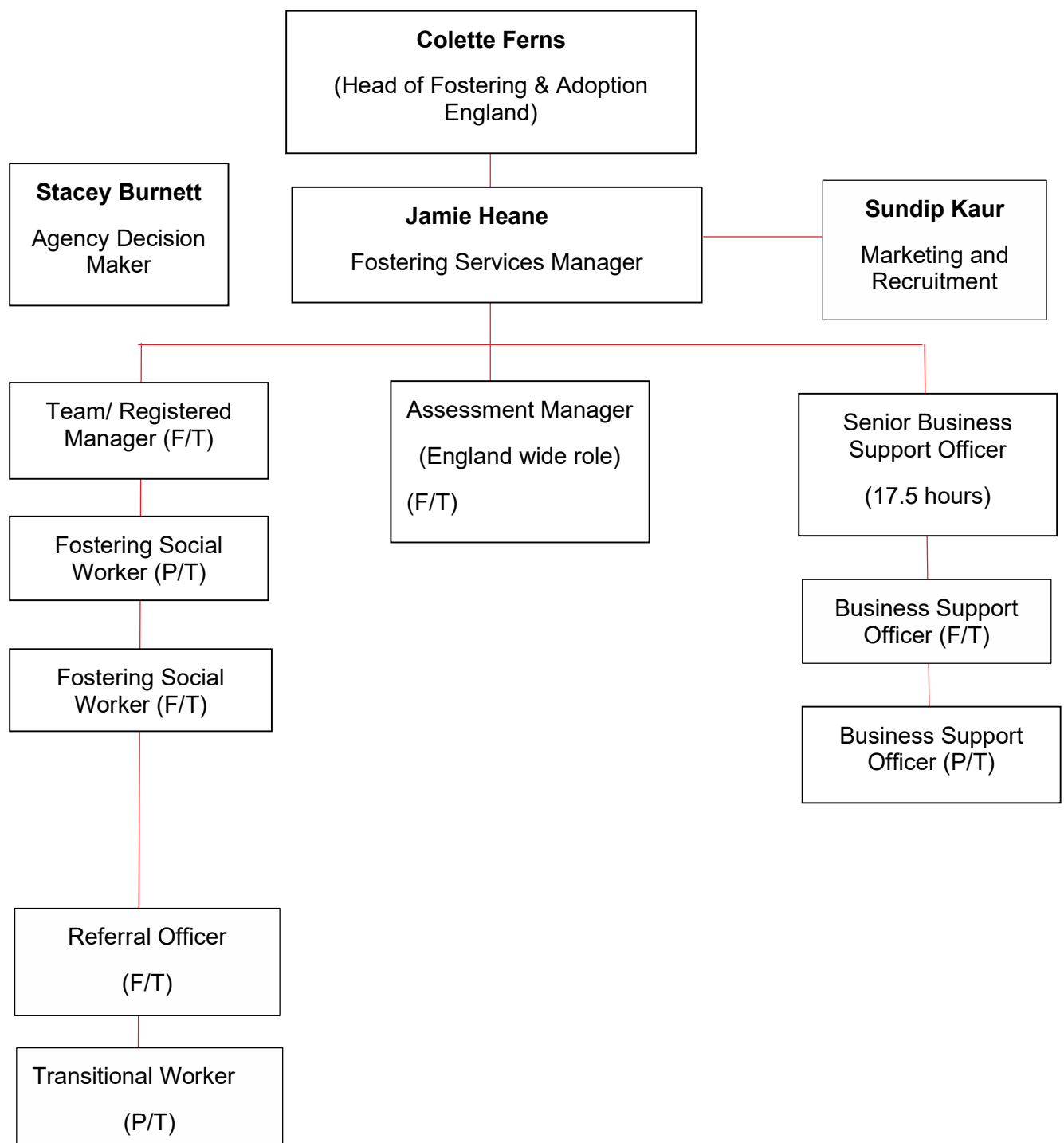
Registered Manager: Kevin White

Address: 10 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5DG

The Registered Manager has 26 years' experience in fostering family placements, Intensive Fostering for Youth Justice Board and previous experience in residential care and a therapeutic CSA service. Also experience of fostering within his own family.

Registered Manager has a Diploma in Social Work and is HCPC Registered. Holds Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Social Care (Children).

Service Staff Structure – South East



Job roles and qualifications

Fostering Service Manager

Is a professionally qualified Social Worker registered with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) and holding management qualifications. Fostering Service Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the fostering services to foster carers, children and young people.

The Fostering Service Manager is responsible for budgetary control and involved with the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation. The Fostering Service Manager is responsible for the management of Team Managers, ensuring all policies and procedures are up to date, completing audits of the service to ensure a high standard, and monitoring and advising on serious complaints and allegations ensuring appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place. Service Manager identifies training needs and liaises with external training agencies to ensure foster carers receive high quality training. Our Service Manager also holds the role of Panel Advisor.

Team Manager/Registered Manager

The Registered/ Team Manager holds the appropriate Social Work and Management qualifications for the role as prescribed by Ofsted. TM/RM is responsible for the day to day running of the service including supervision and management of the Fostering Social Workers, Referral Officer, and Transitional Worker. Responsible for the practice management and ongoing development of the service and overseeing Schedule 6 and 7 recording and reporting, Notifications, etc. Works with Referral Officer, Service Manager, SBSO, etc. on financial matters e.g. forecasting, budget and so on. Also responsible for ensuring safe and well-matched placing of children and young people with our fostering families. Maintains links with supporter's groups in the local community.

Assessment Manager

Our Assessment Manager is a qualified Social Worker and is responsible for overseeing prompt responses and communication with enquiries and applications from potential new foster carers. The Assessment Manager supervises and quality assures the work of Social Workers carrying out Form F assessments, initial visits, Carer's Annual Reviews, etc. Also takes the lead on organising and delivering Skills to Foster training to new foster carer applicants.

Marketing & Recruitment Manager

We are supported by an M&R Manager as part of her nationwide role. M&R Manager explores and utilises numerous marketing tools and platforms to support our recruitment of new foster carers and raise the profile of Action for Children. Also carries out analysis of effectiveness of these via statistical data and implementation of surveys, etc. Our M&S manager also plays an important role in facilitating some major participation events for our

children, young people and fostering families. Our M&R Manager also produces a regular Newsletter for foster carers.

Transitional Worker

Our Transitional Worker engages with and supports our young people from 15 years of age and above. She works with young people and their foster families to help prepare them for, and support them through the challenging transition into adulthood and independent living. This includes continuing to offer support and advice to young people after they have left our service and moved into independent/semi-independent accommodation, etc. Our TW also works alongside young people to support and advise on educational and vocational routes, attending interviews, etc.

Fostering Social Workers

Fostering Social Workers are qualified, experienced and HCP registered. They're primary role is supervising and supporting foster carers and monitoring the welfare and progress of children and young people living with them. They prepare reports for foster carer's annual reviews, run support groups and participate in delivering training. They also facilitate Young People's Groups. FSWs also support with recruitment of foster carers by carrying out some initial visits to applicants and on occasions Form F assessments. Fostering Social Workers also provide our 24/7 out of hours support for foster carers and local authorities wishing to contact us.

Referral Officer

Our Referral Officer deals with a high volume of referrals of children and young people, and parent and children needing a fostering family placement. RO liaises and share information with FSWs, TM and foster carers to identify if we have a suitably matched family. Also liaises with all parties to ensure that if possible introductions, placement planning and meetings are scheduled to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for the child or young person. Our RO supports with placement/income forecasting.

Senior Business Support Officer

We have a SBSO who also works with another Action for Children fostering service. SBSO line manages and supervises BSO2s (administrative support staff). She supports with preparing budget reports, forecasting reports, billing and other finance tasks. SBSO also has oversight of Health and Safety monitoring and completion of Risk Assessments, etc.

Business Support Officer

Our experienced BSOs carry out numerous and varied essential administrative tasks to support our team and the wider service. They are also most often the first point of contact for both internal and external communications. BSOs ensure that compliance checks for foster carers and staff are current and regularly updated. They also liaise with trainers and coordinate and book training venues. BSOs also carry out essential financial tasks, processing invoices, etc.

Panel Administrator (if applicable)

Panel Administrator collates all panel documentation and disseminates to panel chair and members. She also takes and distributes panel minutes. PA also communicates and liaises with Panel Chair, Advisor and Panel Members to ensure we have the required quorum for Fostering Panel sittings. PA is responsible providing panel minutes and supporting documents to the Agency Decision Maker.

Summary of current staffing

There are 7 qualified Social Workers (including management team) registered with the HCPC.

There is a range of experience in the team from 3 -27 years' experience in fostering and social care including child care social work and safeguarding.

Services Provided

Placement types provided

Emergency

Whilst we always prefer to make planned, placements for children and young people we acknowledge that there is sometimes a need for children or young people to be moved from a dangerous situation to a place of safety on an emergency basis. We have carers who can provide unplanned / emergency placements.

Short-term

Short-term placements can last for up to two years, while long-term plans are being formulated.

Bridging

We provide placements with foster carers who are experienced in 'bridging' children to adoption placements, permanent placements or independence. Bridging placements form part of a long-term plan for the child or young person.

Long-term/permanency

Placements are available with long-term foster carers who can take individual children or sibling groups. Long-term placements are matched in accordance with placing authority procedures.

Parent and Child

We are able to provide placements for parents who are under 18years-old, to enable and support them in developing parenting skills. We also provide adult parent and child placements where the parent is aged over 18 years of age but in need of parenting support and or a parenting assessment. Foster carers can assist local authorities with parenting assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo Placements

Solo placements are offered to children who could be a risk to other children and young people, or whose behaviour is so challenging that carers cannot offer enough support if other children are present.

Sibling Placements

Some of our carers are able to care for sibling groups to enable children to remain together.

Complex Placements

We have carers with the skills and experience to care for children and young people with a high level of complex needs.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

We have carers that are experienced and skilled in providing care and support to unaccompanied asylum seeking children. We have a diverse range of foster carers in the London and Essex areas particularly and therefore are sometimes able to offer a placement which is a cultural, ethnic or religious match.

Staying Put Arrangements

These are to enable young people to remain in their foster placement post 18 to support their transition into adulthood.

HOMES Framework

Since April 2020, we have begun introducing elements of the HOMES framework which is supporting to further embed a therapeutic approach in all areas of our work. A psychology service, Changing Minds, who co-created the HOMES framework meet regularly with our team and foster carers to instil key concepts of the framework as outlined further below.



Helping to Build and Maintain Connections

We recognise that our children and carers feel much more settled when they have a stable support network. We know that relationships and a sense of belonging are really important. That is why, we work on building safe trusting relationships between our foster carers, young people, staff, the community and other professionals. We know that our children and carers' placements progress more positively when they have these connections.

Outcomes Focused and Evidence Based

The Homes Framework stresses the importance of capturing each young person's individual journey. This is why we work closely with our carers to set individual goals and track progress from the outset. We then use these personalised measures to identify when changes occur and put in any additional support that's needed. This also helps us to identify achievements and celebrate success.

We also ensure that our therapeutic approach is evidence based and current. We recognise, the importance of providing therapeutic care for our young people throughout their daily experiences and foster carers are viewed as ‘therapeutic parents’ and those who are most able to affect change in the young person. This approach is in line with National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines (NICE, 2015) for supporting young people with attachment difficulties and aligned to the notion of ‘redefining therapy’ as outlined by Rogers et al, 2011¹⁴.

The approach brings together an understanding of complex presentations and makes real and pragmatic links between theory and practice, pitching the interventions in a developmentally congruent way. This understanding, supported by psychologically informed formulation, then helps to inform and prioritise appropriate support plans. The service provided by Changing Minds draws upon a theoretical and evidence-based framework for work with young people with complex presentations that is, developmentally informed and grounded in attachment and trauma theory.

Making Sense Together

What sets us most apart from other services is the way we work together with our carers, young people and other professionals. This first starts during the matching process when we provide detailed information and listen to everyone’s views as part of a joint decision-making process. We aim to adopt a collaborative, curious approach when understanding our young people and their journey. We do this by developing a shared understanding (formulation) of a young person’s strengths and needs.

Empowerment and ‘Working with’

We know how important it is for children and carers to have a voice in decisions from the very start of their fostering journey. This is often key to the success of placements, which is why our relationships are built on clear, honest and respectful communication. The views of children and carers contributes to the ongoing development of our service. Everyone is involved and has a part to play.

Safe, Stable Base

Within our service, we recognise the importance of a nurturing, stable, safe environment for our young people, foster carers and staff team. We understand that stability and security within an attachment relationship is fundamental for a child and young person’s emotional and social development (Hughes, Golding, & Hudson, 2015)¹ and we aim to welcome our young people into supportive, stable home environments. Providing a stable, safe base is also the crucial foundation needed to develop trusting and meaningful relationships in the future.

To enhance safety and consistency, all young people have;

- Individualised risk assessments
- Psychological formulations plans where possible
- Use of 'Matching Documents' and 'Matching Process' to understand the individualised need of each young person to ensure appropriate match to foster carer
- Involvement for foster carers in the development and roll out of the model, and ongoing training and support around this.

Support to Foster Carers includes:

- Monthly supervisions from an experienced Supervising Social Worker, clinical consultations, out of hours on call service, short breaks.
- Our Clinical Psychologist (from Changing Minds UK) provides consultancy for the team around matching young people and foster carers.
- One-page profiles are available for all our foster carers and staff to acknowledge
- Staff are offered a reflective space facilitated by the Clinical Psychologist to explore and consider the emotional impact of working with traumatised young people, and self-care strategies are encouraged.

Recruitment, approval, review and support for foster carers

This section provides information on the procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective foster carers.

Action for Children's policies, procedures and standards for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers are in line with required regulations and standards for fostering services in Regulation 26 (a).

Enquiries

On receiving an enquiry from a prospective foster carer, the Service requests basic information and sends out an information pack containing material about Action for Children, the fostering service and fostering generally. An initial home visit is then arranged by a Fostering Social Worker/Independent Social Worker to discuss in more detail the work of the Service and to answer any queries or concerns the enquirer may have. A decision will be reached as to whether the prospective foster carer wishes to and is suitable to proceed.

Assessment and Approval

If a prospective foster carer is deemed suitable and wishes to proceed, an Application to be assessed / Registration of Interest form will be completed together with written consents to enable the Fostering Service to ascertain their suitability to foster. The process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts. This is referred to as Stage 1 and Stage 2. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information for Stage 1 must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received by the fostering agency.

Stage 1

In accordance with Regulation 26 (1A) the information gathered in Stage 1 includes:

- Full details of the applicant(s) and all household members as well as any children of the applicants living elsewhere.
- Checks undertaken with the police via the DBS / Police Checks/ Access NI on all household members 16 years and over, as well as with the Department of Health, Social Services and any other relevant agency, for example Health, Education, NSPCC, Ofsted, previous fostering and adoption agencies.
- DBS checks may also be undertaken on any other regular visitor to the household who may have care of foster children when placed. Some checks are repeated every three years.
- The applicant is required to have a medical examination which is completed by their GP, who sends the completed Medical Report to Action for Children's Regional Medical Adviser for comments about the applicant(s)' health.

- The applicant is also asked to name three to six personal referees from which a minimum of three will be selected to provide written references and who will also be interviewed as part of the approval process. Where appropriate we also ask for permission to approach the applicant's current or past employer. Adult children and previous partners will also be contacted.

Stage 1 of the assessment process is intended to provide the decision maker with basic information about the applicant's suitability (or not) to proceed to Stage 2 of the assessment in which more detailed information is collected.

Stage 2

If it is decided to undertake Stage 2 of the assessment, regulation 26(2) requires the fostering service to obtain the information about the applicant set out in Part 2 of Schedule 3:

- Details of personality and life experiences.
- Religious persuasion and capacity to care for a child from any particular religious persuasion.
- Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and capacity to care for a child from any particular racial origin or cultural or religious background.
- Past and present employment or occupation, standard of living, leisure activities and interests.
- Previous experience (if any) of caring for their own and other children.
- Skills, competence and potential relevance to their capacity to care effectively for a child placed with them

A qualified and experienced Social Worker will carry out the assessment by visiting the applicant(s)' home and meet with all members of the family and collate information about the applicant(s)' experience and skills. The information from the Social Worker's visit will be collated and forms the basis of an assessment report (BAAF Form F). This report is shared and discussed with the applicants.

During the assessment preparation period, training – Skills to Foster - is provided by the Service. This training includes the role and responsibilities of foster carers, working with different agencies, and child development. All applicants are required to attend.

As part of the process a 'Second Opinion' visit is also carried out by an Action for Children Manager (usually RM). The purpose of this is to gain another perspective on the applicants from someone who is independent of the Form F assessing process.

The completed assessment report is presented to one of the two Action for Children Fostering South Panels. Applicants are expected to attend the Panel.

The Panel will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster carers. These will be passed to a Senior Manager in Action for Children, who is nominated as the organisation's 'Agency Decision Maker', who has the final decision regarding approval on behalf of Action for Children.

Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the Agency Decision Maker's final decision.

Foster Carer Reviews

Reviews take place by Action for Children, in line with regulatory requirements of foster carer Regulation 28 (2).

A first review must take place within 12 months after approval and subsequent reviews take place every 12 months thereafter. Action for Children must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the required standards as set out in Regulation 28 (4).

Reviews may also take place at other times for example as a result of a request to change the terms of approval; following a serious complaint, allegation of abuse, or other matters of serious / safeguarding concern; in response to a significant change of circumstances, such as a carer's adult child returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.

Foster Carer Support and Supervision

Action for Children values the work that foster carers do and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people in their care. The key to a successful placement is the quality of support that foster carers receive. Action for Children offers the following support to all our carers:

- Supervision and support from a named qualified and experienced Social Worker Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. In addition our Fostering Social workers are pragmatic and often work outside of these hours in order to meet with children and young people, respond to situations, attend meetings and so on.
- Access to a specialist fostering help and advice out of office hours support telephone service.
- Frequent visits, (minimum of once per month), negotiated with the carer and regular telephone contact from the supervising social worker. Including at least two unannounced visits per year.
- Regular support group meetings and Buddy Support.
- Participation events available to children and young people placed, foster carers and their birth children, and Action for Children staff.
- A comprehensive post-approval training programme which is linked to (TSDS) Training, Support and Development Standards.
- Where appropriate, and where in line with the child's care plan, we endeavour to provide respite care for the child and a short break for the main carer.
- Good quality liaison and working arrangements with local authorities including attendance at relevant meetings such as Education (PEP) and Looked After Child reviews.
- A level of financial support that values and recognises carer's skills, achievements and time including a foster care fee and fostering allowance.
- A buddy system for carers to share experiences and receive advice and support.
- Access to weekly telephone consultations and quarterly face to face sessions

with a Consultant Child Psychologist.

- A Transitional Worker to work collaboratively the carer/s to support young people's transition to independence.
- Free access to counselling and support from Health Assured.
- Free membership of Fostering Network. Fostering Network are able to offer independent advice and support to foster carers.
- A Foster Carer's Ambassador scheme. Ambassadors are Action for Children foster carers who meet regularly with our senior managers and act as a conduit for sharing the views of their fellow carers and disseminating information from the organisation to foster carers.

Foster Carer Training

Action for Children recognises that fostering is an extremely complex and demanding job and we are committed to providing high quality training that is accessible and relevant to all our foster carers.

Training is provided to help foster carers develop their fostering role, to improve knowledge and to define and refine the skills they already have. The training is delivered within an explicit value base which promotes equality of opportunity and recognises and celebrates diversity. It seeks to ensure that all carers are competent and confident in providing safe care and in protecting children from harm.

Foster Carers are supported to complete Training Support and Development Standards for foster carers (TSDS) within 12 months of Approval.

Training is offered throughout a carer's career with Action for Children and incorporates a range of topics which evolve with changes in practice, legislation and needs, examples of which are:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| - child protection | - resilience building |
| - recording | - self-esteem & identity |
| - first aid | - life story work |
| - managing difficult behaviour | - managing and promoting contact |
| - attachment | - child development |
| - bereavement and loss | - equal opportunities |
| - health and safety | - drugs and alcohol awareness |
| - relationship and sexual health | - education and health |
| - sexual exploitation | - anti-radicalisation |
| - Administering and recording medication | - Specialist placement trauma |

Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a range of systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of Action for Children's fostering services, to ensure they are effective and that the quality is of an appropriate standard.

The following mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the service:

- Carer(s)' Annual Reviews
- Carers' Consultation Forms
- Child's Feedback via Mind of My Own
- Annual staff appraisals
- Monthly supervision of carer(s)
- Regular supervision of staff
- Feedback from carers regarding training
- Feedback from carers via annual service satisfaction questionnaire
- Feedback from other professionals
- Feedback from local authority and IROs at children's LAC reviews
- Feedback from local authority and other professionals prior to carer(s) reviews

Complaints, allegations and whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the reporting of a concern in the public interest that something is happening within Action for Children that should not be, or not happening that should be (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998).

Action for Children is committed to developing a safe and open culture. Action for Children takes malpractice very seriously and is committed to delivering our charitable services with honesty and integrity. Action for Children encourages open communication from all those who work for us and wants everyone to feel secure about raising concerns.

For details on where to report a concern see Section 8 – Other Contacts.

Complaints

Action for Children welcomes all comments and feedback about the way we work, whether positive or negative. We aim to resolve a complaint or problem as quickly and efficiently as possible in a personal, fair and confidential way.

Action for Children is committed to excellent customer service. We regard complaints as an opportunity to turn a negative experience for a customer or service user into a positive one, as well as an opportunity to learn and to improve.

The purpose of our complaints handling procedures is to ensure that we:

- listen and are responsive to people who raise an issue with us
- respond swiftly and at a level close to the point of service delivery
- are fair and consistent
- offer solutions and/or explanations

- offer complainants recourse to someone more senior/more independent if they wish
- ensure that staff who are mentioned in complaints receive support
- respect confidentiality
- record complaints consistently, and monitor what we record
- use complaints positively as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

In making a complaint we believe most people want:

- to be listened to;
- to have the problem accepted as important;
- to be offered a solution or explanation;
- to have their distress acknowledged and
- to be assured the same thing will not happen again.
- it is therefore essential that people raising a complaint are involved in discussing their concerns and in finding solutions.

How to Complain

Step 1 – Tell Us

The complainant should ask to speak to the team leader or the manager, in person or by phone who will be happy to meet. Complainants can also ask a staff member for the details of the next most senior manager.

Step 2 – We will respond to your complaint

Action for Children will determine the best way to look into the complaint. This is usually done by the manager, or a senior member of staff, of the service concerned; but for serious complaints we may involve someone more senior straight away. We will usually need to discuss the complaint with the complainant so we are clear about the desired outcome. We will aim to address the complaint within 10 working days; if this isn't possible, we will provide an explanation and indication of when a full response can be expected (within a further 10 working days). A written response to the complaint will be received.

Step 3 – If you're not happy with our response

If the complainant isn't satisfied, they can contact the Complaints and Policy Officer and let them know the reasons why they remain unhappy (0800 328 7822). This should be done within 20 working days of receiving our written response.

Step 4 – If you remain dissatisfied

The complaint can be requested to be reviewed by a senior manager. The Complaints and Policy Officer will also advise of any external agencies to be complained to.

Confidentiality

We will only tell people involved in resolving the complaint about it. After it's resolved, we will keep a summary on record, using guidance from the Data Protection Act. The record will

be placed on the service user file, where relevant. We use anonymised information from complaints to make sure we learn and improve our services.

For details on where to report a concern see Section 8 – Other Contacts.

Other routes of complaint

Where a service is registered with an external body (e.g. Ofsted), complainants may directly approach the relevant regulatory body at any stage. The regulatory body has the power to investigate the complaint itself or require Action for Children's or the relevant local authority / trust to do so.

For details on the relevant regulatory body and their contact details see section 8.

Allegations against foster carers/staff Allegations made by a child (or on behalf of a child) will be followed up via Safeguarding Procedures under 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015'.

As part of Working Together procedures, there is a section on Managing Allegations against People who Work with Children.

This applies to all people who work with children and includes foster carers. Further information can be provided if such a situation should to arise.

COVID 19 Statement

We understand that we have been and are, living in changing and challenging times. Action for Children have regularly released guidance around working practices throughout the pandemic period. These procedures to take account of current Government regulations and guidance, while seeking to maintain a safe environment for our staff and children and families with whom we have contact.

Our Social Workers work in a COVID safe way so that potential carers can still begin their journey into becoming a foster carer and that we will keep them safe every step of the way.

Assessments

There is a national shortage of foster carers and we are continuing to look for foster carers to join the Action for Children family. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on families across the UK has been huge, and there are over 60,000 children in foster care in the UK that need a safe and nurturing home.

- Our local team are working a hybrid mix of working remotely from home and in the local office.
- We are always available to take calls and are ready to answer any questions you may have over the phone.
- The stages of the recruitment process from the initial visit through to the assessment process will be completed virtually and face to face (if safe to do so) by one of our experienced social workers.

Will I have to attend training?

All applicants in the assessment process would normally attend a 3 day face to face training course called Skills to Foster. Action for Children have adapted this to an online course.

Do I have to attend a Fostering Panel?

All foster carers at the end of their fostering assessment will attend a Fostering Panel to become foster carers. We are currently holding all Panels virtually.

When I become a foster carer – what if I get Covid, will the child I'm looking after have to move?

This will be the same as with your own children; you will follow government guidelines at the time of any positive test.

What if a child I am looking after gets Covid?

This will be the same as with your own children; you will follow government guidelines at the time of any positive test.

Already fostering with us?

Action for Children continue to follow government guidelines as they are released and keep both foster carers and staff updated with any developments within our service. We are supporting our foster carers through the continuation monthly supervisions, support groups, use of technology and where face to face visits are unable to happen, the operation of TEAMS video calls is in place.

Should you have any questions, please contact your Supervising Social Worker or your local office.

Regulation and inspection of services

Action for Children's Fostering Services are regulated under the Children Act 1989, the National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Fostering Services regulations 2011 and Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 as amended by the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

Action for Children's Fostering Services are registered and inspected as an independent fostering agency with Ofsted. Ofsted is responsible for inspecting the fostering agency. They will also receive and investigate any complaints about the fostering agency.

Significant Incidents are reported to Ofsted under Schedule 7 of the Care fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Fostering agencies are now being assessed at one of four levels: -

Outstanding / Good / Requires Improvement to be Good/Inadequate

The last Ofsted inspection of the Fostering South East Service took place on 18th – 22nd October 2021 and the outcome of this was a rating of 'GOOD' in all areas.

Contact details; Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

Ofsted Information Helpline: 0300 123 1231 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
<http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

Other relevant contact details

Action for Children Whistleblowing Champion Nick Jones, Managing Director, FC&P, email: whistleblowing@actionforchildren.org.uk

Action for Children Senior management team: Tim O'Neill, Managing Director: Operations - Tim.Oneill@actionforchildren.org.uk, Melanie Armstrong, Chief Executive
Melanie.Armstrong@actionforchildren.org.uk

24-hour Whistleblowing line on 0800 047 4037 provided by Health Assured as part of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Action for Children whistleblowing trustee, currently Markus Ruetimann, at trustee.whistleblowing@actionforchildren.org.uk

Customer Service and Complaints Manager, Action for Children, 10 Great Queen St, London WC2B 5DG Telephone: 0800 328 7822

Children's Commissioners www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/