



Action for Children

Statement of Purpose

Service: Fostering North

Registered: Independent Fostering Agency

Registration Body: Ofsted

Year: 2024-2025

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Section 1- 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)
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Agencies (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 to colleagues from other agencies.

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

The Statement of Purpose is provided to Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) and is also made available to staff, children, birth parents and guardians, prospective foster carers, foster carers, children, Local Authorities, and the general public.

It is also published on our website: actionforchildren.org.uk

A copy can also be made available on request from our Head Office or our local office based in Doncaster.

The information in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in other languages, large print, Braille or on auto tape. Please telephone or write to us if you need any of these formats or any other help to access our services.

Since 1st April 2020, Action for Children Fostering has recruited safely, and within Government guidelines

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 that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on families across the UK is 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 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.

Already fostering with us?

Action for Children follows government guidelines carefully and keeps both foster carers and staff updated with any developments within our service. We are supporting our foster carers through the continuation of catch-up calls, monthly supervisions, 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.

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. Action 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 in the country has a safe and happy childhood and the foundations they need to thrive.

Our Mission

We protect and support children 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 and ambitious for children.
- Collaborative - internally and externally with other organizations 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) is Colette Ferns

Head Office

3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD18 8AG

Email: ask@actionforchildren.org.uk

Telephone number: 01923 361 500

Aims, objectives and outcomes

The overall intention of foster care is to provide a family based alternative home for children who are not able to live at home with their parents or guardians, nor able to live with their relatives or friends or children for whom a loving home cannot be secured through adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order.

We aim to:

1. Provide a safe, secure, and enabling environment for every child placed in our care and for varying lengths of time dependent on their assessed needs. To this end, foster carers will be appropriately assessed, trained, and supervised to provide high quality care that values diversity and individual identity, as well as promoting healthy development and emotional security. This includes undertaking evidence based and analytical assessments of prospective foster carers which are quality assured by a manager within the service.
2. Promote and safeguard the physical and emotional welfare of every child placed in our care. Therefore, all prospective and approved foster carers will be required to provide satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as and when required by the service. Applications will not be considered if they or a member of their household have committed offences specified under Regulation 26 (7)(b) of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

Additionally, all applicants must have satisfactory medical reports and will not be considered to foster children under five years of age or with a respiratory condition, if they smoke. Foster carers who do smoke must not smoke in the presence of children placed in their care and are encouraged to engage in smoking cessation programme.

Furthermore, allegations of abuse or neglect made against a foster care will be reported to the appropriate agencies with a view to being investigated in accordance with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB) and in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Any standards of care concerns will be investigated by the service as proportionate to the circumstances of the case and in consultation with relevant agencies. We will ensure that the welfare of every child placed in our care is always the paramount consideration of the service and that the safeguarding of every child's welfare, safety and security is held at the heart of what we do.

3. Ensure that children are safe and feel and that they understand how to protect themselves. This includes ensuring there is a Safer Care Plan regarding every fostering household which is individualized to the child.
4. Ensure that children know that their views, wishes, and feelings are considered in all aspects of their care, are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act on their wishes in all cases and know how to obtain support and make a complaint.

5. Ensure that children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience, and an understanding of their background. One way we do this is by making sure every child receives a personal allowance from their foster carer, consistent with their age and understanding.
6. Ensure that every child placed in our care enjoys sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately. We do this by promoting therapeutic parenting techniques and providing our foster carers with membership of the National Association of Therapeutic Parents (NATP) should they wish to.
7. To ensure that children rarely go missing and if they do, return quickly. With this, we act with other agencies to make sure if a child does go missing, they are protected as far as possible and are also responded to positively on their return. This includes foster carers taking appropriate action to find a missing child, including reporting them missing to the police.
8. Ensure that every child placed in our care lives in a healthy environment, where their physical, emotional, and psychological needs are promoted and where they can access services to meet their health needs. This includes providing the opportunity to every foster carer to access clinical supervision with a Trauma and Attachment Therapist.
9. We act to ensure that every child placed in our care is encouraged to access community resources and opportunities. With this, foster carers will be financially supported to encourage children to participate in community and out of school leisure activities. We do this by ensuring there is a Delegated Authority Agreement in place regarding the child which enables foster carers to make everyday decisions about the children they care for, such as allowing them to go to friends' houses for sleepovers and signing consent forms for school trips.
10. Be aspirational for every child placed in our care and will act to ensure they are provided with opportunity, through health care, education, and social and leisure activities, to have high aspirations for themselves. Additionally, to develop their full potential and achieve the five outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying life and achieving their aspirations, enjoying economic wellbeing, and making a positive contribution to society. We do this by ensuring our foster carers work in close positive partnerships with school and colleges and participate in the development, delivery, and review of a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for every child.
11. Promote contact between a child placed in our care and their birth family and friends, in line with the child's Care Plan. With this Action for Children acknowledges the importance of family and friends to a child and our foster carers are expected to encourage and facilitate contact, as appropriate.

12. To ensure that every child placed in our care lives in a foster home with adequate space which is to a suitable standard. We do this by ensuring that every foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there, including, where appropriate, any suitable aids and adaptations. We do this by undertaking a Home Safety Check as part of the assessment of prospective foster carers which is repeated annually upon their approval. Furthermore, we undertake unannounced visits to every foster home at least twice a year, exceeding National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services requirements in this regard.
13. To ensure that every child is welcomed into the home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued. We do this by ensuring that children are carefully matched to a foster placement by completing individual matching assessments for every child.
14. Ensure that any child placed in our care who wishes to stay with their foster carers upon reaching 18 years of age can do so under a Staying Put arrangement, if this is in accordance with their Pathway Plan and as agreed with all concerned.
15. Ensure that every child placed in our care has a Care Plan which details how their needs will be met and that their Care Plan is reviewed regularly by the placing local authority
16. Work as part of the team around the child to ensure that every child placed in our care is returned to their family and community network at the earliest opportunity, whenever it is in their best interests for this to happen. Where reunification to their family is not in a child's best interests, we will work with everyone concerned to help achieve alternative permanence for a child in a stable and loving family environment which is maintained until adulthood.

Action for Children Fostering North is committed to helping achieve best outcomes for children in need of foster care, including by acting to ensure that have the opportunity of a loving and stable foster home where their individual needs are understood and met.

Section 2 – Service Registration Details

Name and address of the Registered Provider

Action for Children
Unit 1 Nidd House
Richmond Business Park Sidings Court
Doncaster
DN4 5NL

Yorkshire & Humber Area

Email: fosteringsheffield@actionforchildren.org.uk

Tel: 01302 320016

Middlesbrough Area

Email: fosteringmiddlesbrough@actionforchildren.org.uk

Tel: 01642 249 452

Responsible Individual: Colette Ferns

Head of Fostering & Adoption Action for Children

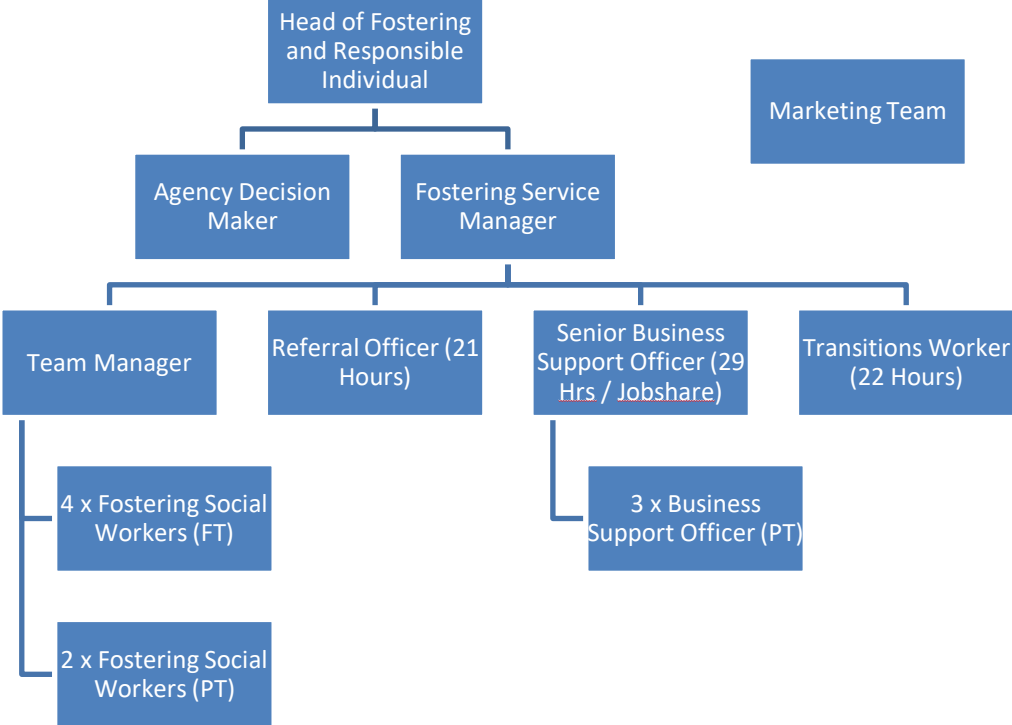
Registered Manager: Paul Goodwin

Fostering Service Manager Fostering North

Qualifications: Diploma in Social Work (BA Honors) Health & Social Care, Practice Teaching Award, PGCSM in Social Services Management, NVQ 5 Social Care Management.

The Registered Manager has experience in statutory social work, mainly in Children's Services delivery with significant safeguarding experience.

Section 3: Service Staff Structure



Job roles & qualifications

Fostering Service Manager/Registered Manager

Are professionally qualified Social Workers registered with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) and hold management qualifications. Fostering Service Managers / Registered Managers are responsible for the overall operation of the fostering services to foster carers, children, and young people.

The Fostering Service Managers / Registered Managers are responsible for budgetary control and involved with the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organization. The Fostering Service Managers / Registered Managers are responsible for the management of Team Managers, ensure all policies and procedures are up to date, complete audits of the service to ensure a high standard, and monitor and advise on serious complaints and allegations ensuring appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place.

Team Manager

Team Managers are professionally qualified Social Workers registered with the HCPC and are responsible for the supervision and management of the Social Workers and Support Workers. Team Managers take responsibility for developing training and supporting services for foster carers. They coordinate training alongside responsibilities for recruitment and assessment. The Team Manager also acts as professional advisor to the Fostering Panel.

Fostering Social Worker

On approval, a foster carer is allocated a named Fostering Social Worker (FSW). Their FSW will usually be the foster carer's first point of contact with the service during working hours and they will offer support, advice, and supervision regarding matters to do with fostering and the care they give to a child. The FSW is responsible for the foster carer's support and development. Contact is maintained through home visits and regular telephone calls, texts and /or e mails. The FSW is required to undertake a supervisory home visit monthly at least and they will undertake an unannounced visit at least twice a year. Support is also provided to any child placed with the foster carer and other members of the household, as appropriate.

Fostering Social Workers also undertake the assessment of prospective foster carers

Referral Officer

The Referral Officer identifies suitable referrals for the service and undertakes initial liaison and follow up with local authorities.

Transition Worker

The Transition worker supports families with children to build long-term belonging. They provide one-to-one practical and emotional support to build aspirations, help families maintain stable relationships into adulthood and support with accommodation needs if

appropriate. The worker will also work with young people to identify suitable training, employment or education opportunities, support in developing a young person's living skills and work with foster carers to help them promote long term family belonging, post-independence. They also provide support through activity-based workshops/groups.

Senior Business Support Officer

The Senior Business Officer coordinates the running of the office functions within the service and oversees business critical functions such as billing and invoicing.

Business Support Officer

Supports the team and reports to the Senior Business Officer.

Marketing Team

We are supported by the England Fostering and Adoption Marketing Team. The Marketing Lead analyses our target demographic using internal and external surveys and research. The role also includes monitoring the effectiveness of marketing and recruitment platforms for each project. The Marketing Officers create ongoing content appropriate to our audiences and promote on relevant channels. They also produce quarterly email newsletters for foster parents.

The Marketing Team includes two Engagement Officers who manage all engagement calls from enquirers and book Initial Visits with project staff. They also support projects to facilitate local information events.

Summary of current staffing

There are 8 qualified social workers registered with the HCPC (including leadership team).

There is a range of experience in the team specifically in fostering and social care, with significant experience in the Looked After children field

Section 4 – Services Provided

Short Planned Breaks

We have foster carers who provide short, planned breaks placements either on a regular basis or impromptu basis to offer children the opportunity to enhance their life experience and to support parents, guardians, or other foster carers in their continued care of the child. These can be for children living at home with a parent or guardian, children already cared for by other Action for Children foster carers or children cared for within other fostering agency placements.

Short-term

Short-term foster care involves caring for children for any period from one night only for longer than a year, while long-term plans are being formulated.

A child cared for within a short term fostering arrangement may return to the care of a parent/guardian or if this is assessed as not being in a child's best interests, they may move on to be cared for by a family member or friend or to long term fostering or adoption.

Alternatively, a short-term placement may become a long-term placement, if this is assessed as appropriate and agreed by all concerned, including the foster carer.

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 and can last up to several months, or longer if needed.

Long-term/permanency

Placements are available with long-term foster carers who can care for individual children or sibling groups until they reach adulthood or possibly beyond, if a Staying Put arrangements is agreed by all concerned.

For children to be matched long term with foster carers, this may also require consideration by the placing local authority's Fostering or Permanence Panel.

Parent and child

We can provide parent and child placements. This can involve caring for a child who is under 18 years-old, and their child, or an adult parent, so that they can receive support in developing their parenting skills. In such circumstances foster carers can assist local authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo care

Solo placements are offered to children whose individual needs are such that they need to be cared for on their own. This might be because they have complex and/or challenging individual needs or if they may be a potential risk to other children.

Sibling care

Several of our foster carers can care for sibling groups to enable children to stay together throughout their childhood.

Other Specialist care

Our carers also provide care for children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation, trafficking, and /or display harmful sexualized behaviours, sexual abuse recovery and emotional health and wellbeing. These carers are provided with additional support and training.

Unaccompanied children

We can provide care for children/young people who are unaccompanied from overseas.

Staying Put arrangements

When a young person reaches eighteen years of age, whilst they no longer require foster care, they may wish to remain with their former foster carer under a Staying Put Arrangement. Such an arrangement is usually agreed directly with local authority concerned by the young adult and their former foster carer. Many young people are not ready to leave their foster home at eighteen years of age and a Staying Put arrangement can support their transition into adulthood.

Section 5 - Recruitment, Preparation and Assessment of 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 about fostering, albeit via telephone, on-line, in writing or in person, the service will respond by sending out an information pack containing material about Action for Children, the fostering service and fostering generally. This is followed up by one-to-one contact by a member of staff by phone at a time requested by the enquirer to determine if an initial home visit is suitable.

An initial home visit with a social worker is then arranged to discuss in more detail the work of the Service and to answer in greater depth any queries or concerns the enquirer may have. A decision will be reached as to whether the enquirer wishes to and is suitable to proceed.

With this the service has developed timescales for responding to enquiries about the service. This includes follow up contact being made within no more than 3-working days of an expression of interest being received but more usually within 1 day.

Preparation of prospective foster carers

After an initial visit, if an enquiry is deemed suitable and the enquirer wishes to proceed, an Application Form will be completed together with written consents to enable the service to ascertain their suitability to foster.

The applicant will also be allocated a place on a Skills to Foster training course. This course helps to prepare and equip applicants to undertake the role of foster carer. This training includes the role and responsibilities of foster carers, working with different agencies, and child development. All applicants are required to attend.

Assessment of prospective foster carers

All fostering assessments are completed within 6 months of application, unless there is exceptional reasons why this is not possible, for example, a significant change in the prospective foster carers personal circumstances.

All fostering assessments follow the two- stage assessment process detailed in the Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations, July 2013. However, most assessments run Stage 1 and Stage 2 concurrently.

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 18 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 four personal referees from which a minimum of two will be selected to be interviewed as part of the approval process. We would also take a reference for the applicants most current employer and any other employment where they have worked with children or vulnerable adults. 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 as below:

- Details of personality and life experiences.
- Religious persuasion and capacity to care for a child from any religious persuasion.

- Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, and capacity to care for a child from any 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

An experienced Social Worker will carry out the assessment by visiting the applicant(s) at home, by meeting with all members of the household and collating information about the applicant(s)' experience and skills.

The information from the Social Worker's visits will be collated and forms the basis of an assessment report (BAAF Form F). This report is shared and discussed with the applicants who sign the report prior to being presented to panel. The designated manager also signs off the report.

The completed assessment report is presented to the Action for Children North Fostering Panel.

All new assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration as are first Annual Reviews, Reviews recommending a change to a foster carer's terms of approval, and Reviews following an allegation or misconduct by a foster carer. Foster carers and prospective foster carers are given the opportunity to attend and be heard at all panel meetings at which their approval is being discussed and to bring a supporter to the panel if they wish.

The Panel will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster carers. This will be passed to a Senior Manager in Action for Children, who is nominated as the organization's 'Agency Decision Maker' (ADM). The ADM then makes a qualifying determination on the applicant's or carers suitability. In doing so, the ADM takes account of all the information available to them, including the recommendation of the fostering panel, within seven working days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of panel minutes.

Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the Agency Decision Maker's final decision, within 2 working days and 5 working days respectively.

Foster Carer Reviews

Foster Carer Reviews take in accordance with regulatory requirements as outlined in Regulation 28 (2).

First Reviews will take place within twelve months of approval and subsequent Reviews take place at least every twelve months thereafter.

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 significant health issue.

All Foster Carers Review are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer and Action for

Children must be satisfied that the foster carer continues to meet the required standards as set out in Regulation 28 (4).

Foster Carer Support

Action for Children values the work that foster carers do and the contribution they make to the lives of children in their care. The service recognizes that the key to achieving good outcomes for children, foster carers need to have access to a comprehensive package of support.

Action for Children offers the following support to all our foster carers:

- Supervision and support from a named qualified and experienced FSW during office hours 9am – 5pm.
- Access to our specialist fostering help and advice out of office hours support telephone line to ensure there is support available 24/7.
- Monthly supervision arranged between the foster carer and their FSW.
- Regular telephone contact in between times.
- At least two unannounced visits per year by an FSW.
- Peer support via regular support group meetings and by being provided with a fostering buddy if this is wished for.
- Social events for children in placement, carers children, carers, and member of their household.
- A comprehensive post-approval face to face and online training programme which is linked to Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards.
- Where appropriate, and where in line with the child's care plan, a short break service to provide alternative experiences / planned breaks for the child.
- Good quality liaison and working arrangements with local authorities including attendance at relevant meetings such as Personal Education Plan (PEP) and Looked After Child Reviews.
- A level of financial support that values and recognizes our foster carer's skills, achievements and time including a foster care fee and fostering allowance.
- Quarterly Foster Carer Business Meetings which provide the opportunity to meet with senior managers and to feedback on the service and contribute to its continued improvement.
- Children's Guide, providing simple but clear information to children about what it is like to live in a foster home.
- Individual memberships of Fostering Network, National Association of Therapeutic Parents and Research in Practice is available to carers who wish to use.
- Access to Fosterline, a national forum for all UK foster carers.
- Access to clinical supervision and support from a Trauma and Attachment Therapist
- Access to counselling in recognition of the challenges and impact fostering can have on foster carers.

Foster carer training

Action for Children recognizes that fostering is a complex and demanding role, 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 recognizes 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 (TSD) Standards for foster carers (TSDS) within 12 months of approval.

Foster carers are required to completed Basic Safeguarding, First Aid and Behaviour Support training within 6 months of approval. In addition, all foster carers are required to complete at least one safeguarding type of course a year, for example, Anti Radicalization or Female Genital Mutilation. Furthermore, all foster carers are required to update First Aid training at least every three years.

Training is offered throughout a foster carer's period of approval. The training programme which incorporates a range of topics which evolve with changes in practice, legislation and needs, examples of which are:

- Radicalization
- Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Identity
- Managing Allegations
- Child Exploitation
- Understanding Sensory Processing Difficulties
- Understanding Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.
- Behaviour Management

Our current training offer is further enhanced by virtual online training from Kate Cairns & bi-monthly access to training from our psychological support service: Changing Minds.

Section 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a range of systems in place to monitor and evaluate the services we provide and to ensure they are effective, also that the quality of these services is to the standard set by Action for children. These include the following:

- Monthly Supervision of staff
- Annual Staff Appraisals
- Child Feedback via Mind of My Own
- Carer's Annual Reviews
- Carer's Consultation forms
- Monthly Supervision of carers

- Regular File Audits
- Fostering Panel Feedback
- Annual Satisfaction Questionnaire
- Foster Carer Consultation Forms at Foster Carer Reviews
- Evaluations of training from foster carers attending our courses.
- Feedback from other professionals to Foster Carer Reviews
- Feedback from local authority/ Trust workers at children's LAC Reviews
- Feedback from local authority/ Trust workers prior to carer(s) Reviews

Section 7: 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 arise.

Section 8: 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 inspection of Fostering North was assessed with a Judgement Outcome of 'GOOD' in February 2022.

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 interim Whistleblowing Champion Nick Jones at whistleblowing@actionforchildren.org.uk

Action for Children Senior management team: Brigitte Gater, Interim Managing Director of Children's Services Brigitte.Gater@actionforchildren.org.uk, Paul Carberry, Chief Executive paul.carberry@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/