



Action for Children

Statement of Purpose

Service: Northwest Fostering

Date: 2023-2024

Registered: Independent Fostering Agency

Registration Body: Ofsted

Registration Number: 1226858



"It's like a big family so it doesn't feel like a job at all." – Gordon



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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)
- 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.

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 (if safe to do so) by one of our experienced social workers. Visits will always be risk assessed.

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.

If you are unable to have a face to face medical, we are asking all GP's surgeries to complete a virtual medical. If they are unable to do either, we can request your medical records to be accessed by the Medical Advisor. This would be completed with you virtually. We ask for a face to face medical as soon as is practical.

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 are following government guidelines carefully and are keeping both foster carers and staff updated with any developments within our service. We are supporting our foster carers through the continuation of weekly 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.

The government have put together a page specifically for [guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) during the COVID-19 outbreak.

They have also produced some [publications with guidance info, in a range of languages and reading abilities](#).

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 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 is Colette Ferns

Head Office

Action for Children

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Aims, objectives and outcomes.

Action for Children Northwest Fostering Service covers the geographical areas of North West England and also the Midlands.

Aims

At our Northwest Fostering service, we provide safe, stable, supportive homes for children and young people who have a history of attachment disruption, abuse, neglect, and trauma. We aim to provide safe and stable placements, where young people feel listened to and trusted and can contribute to the development of our service. We believe that it is important to empower our foster carers, working collaboratively and involving them in decision-making, ensuring that they have the necessary resources and skills to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for. With regards to the wider service, we aim to establish joint goals and a common understanding through open, transparent communication, to respect the views of others, and to ensure a blame-free culture that learns from experience and celebrates success.

Action for Children supports and speaks out for the UK's most vulnerable and neglected children and young people in order to bring about positive changes in their lives. At Northwest Fostering, both mainstream and therapeutic placements are provided, which aim to provide safe, secure, and stable family placements within the community. By developing a shared understanding of the young person, we provide a tailored plan to support their needs and build upon their strengths. The children and young people that we support (age range 4-18 years) have complex needs including:

- Developmental trauma,
- Histories of attachment disruption
- Neglect
- Ongoing attachment/relational needs,
- Trauma-related needs,
- Executive functioning difficulties,
- Vulnerability within relationships,
- Social communication difficulties (e.g. Autistic Spectrum conditions)



Young People may present with a range of complex and high-risk behaviours including self-harm or suicidal behaviours, eating difficulties, disgust behaviours (e.g., soiling, smearing), difficulties accessing/exclusion from educational settings, physical and verbal aggression, sexually disinhibited behaviours, and offending behaviours. Referrals are received through the Northwest Framework.

Our multi-disciplinary team consists of a Team Manager, experienced fostering Social Workers, Young Person's/Family workers, who work directly with the young people to support their therapeutic action plan and also work with foster carers and extended family members, including birth family. Although all staff are trained in attachment and developmental trauma and a therapeutic parenting approach (Parenting with PACE), the service also adopts an integrative approach, with staff trained in multiple therapeutic modalities, to work with the young person's individual needs.

We also have specialist psychological input four days a month provided by a Clinical Psychologist, an Assistant Psychologist, and a Senior Clinical Psychologist from Changing Minds UK. This service provides ongoing psychological consultation, formulation, training and guidance for the staff team and foster carers with the aim of ensuring that a therapeutic, and evidence-informed framework is utilised to support the young people, foster carers, and staff. The service also supports senior staff in aspects of service development and psychologically informed delivery.

The HOMES model was devised in 2019, with consultation from foster carers, a young person ambassador from Action for Children, staff working within NW fostering, the Senior Management team, and Changing Minds UK.

“Foster carers receive regular supervision, and mandatory and bespoke training. This helps them to support the needs of the children in their care and to develop their skills and knowledge.”

– Ofsted Inspection Report September 2018

“With the 24-hour support, we know that we are never alone”.

– Paula and Dave



Objectives and Outcomes

The HOMES Model

Building supportive homes for children with complex histories of attachment disruption, neglect, abuse, and trauma

We have a five-stage model of support, as follows:

1. Safe, Stable Base
2. Empowerment and 'Working with'
3. Making Sense Together
4. Outcomes Focused and Evidence Based
5. Helping to Build and Maintain Connections



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
- risk management/minimisation plans and a clear, consistent plan of how to manage these.
- A Safety Plan is also collaboratively developed with each young person and foster carer.



- 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, individual support sessions to young people, out of hours on call service, short breaks.
- Our Clinical Psychologist (from Changing Minds UK) provides consultancy for our Team Manager around matching young people and foster carers.
- One-page profiles are available for all our foster carers and staff to acknowledge strengths and areas that are more challenging - 'what works and what does not work.' Foster carers explore their own attachment histories and reflect on which relational dynamics they find more difficult to manage.
- Self-care training and support plans - It is acknowledged that when supporting young people, foster carer stress levels may increase. Therefore, all members of the team attend self-care training and individual support plans are developed to consider what support needs may be useful for our foster carers and staff.
- Foster carer groups are facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist to offer a safe space to explore and discuss current challenges in a non-judgmental, compassionate space. The group also shares best practice, and the carers learn from each other. Foster carers can share experiences that will be validated and normalised by group members.

Support to team members includes:

- Spotlight (personality) profiles are completed with all staff members, and shared within a team setting, to increase self-awareness and awareness of others in the team and think about how the team can best work together. A one-page profile is created for each staff member for ease of use.
- 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.
- Staff debrief sessions are offered to the staff team explore the emotional impact of work and reflect and learn from experiences.

Empowerment and 'Working with'

We ensure.

- A person-centred approach, where we work alongside our foster carers as a team.



- communication is clear, honest, and transparent, and carers are involved in decision-making processes.
- We listen to the voices of our young people and foster carers, enabling them to collaboratively set realistic aims and expectations for their placement and the ongoing therapeutic work.
- We encourage our young people to be part of their care planning/Therapeutic Action Plan and support this process in an innovative and creative manner.
- We acknowledge that it is important to reflect upon the inherent power imbalances regarding privacy, confidentiality, and dignity. Wherever possible, the young person (or foster carer) will be given as much privacy as possible, although this will need to be balanced in order to keep them and other people safe. Any decisions which may limit privacy/dignity will be underpinned by a comprehensive risk assessment and management plan, involving the young person where possible, with clear plans and expectations to increase feelings of safety.
- Children and young people will also be supported to attend their LAC reviews to ensure their views are heard and inform their care plan.
- We use Mind of My Own to capture the voice of the child and young person. If a young person is not able to, or does not wish to attend their reviews, they will be supported to contribute through other means such as a chosen person attending the meeting to feedback their views.
- As a service, we value co-production and working with our young people and foster carers to develop and further shape the service. For example, we have run sessions for young people and foster carers to input into the development of this model.

Making Sense Together

From the onset, we aim to adopt a collaborative, curious approach when understanding our young people and their journey. To facilitate this, we value working closely with other professionals and agencies to develop shared understanding of the young person and their strengths and needs, promote strong systems of communication, and a consistent plan and agreed way of supporting the young person. This approach can then create 'everyone on board' partnership working.

Upon receiving a referral, we complete an extensive matching process, where we work in partnership with professionals supporting the young person to establish if we have a suitable foster carer to meet the young person's needs. When a young person first enters our service (or prior to this where possible), we facilitate a multi-agency formulation meeting, led by our Clinical Psychologist. All relevant professionals are invited to this meeting, such as social worker, education, mental health staff etc., and the current (and previous where appropriate) foster carers are also supported to attend. The psychological formulation (DCP, 2011)² meeting aims to summarise and integrate the knowledge that all attendees may hold about the young person and draw upon psychological theory to better understand the young person's needs and strengths, how their difficulties may have developed over time, and factors that might be maintaining any difficulties. This 'shared understanding' can then help the team to agree a way forward for the young person, and which types of intervention (with the child or system) might be most appropriate.



Outcomes Focused and Evidence Based

We recognise the importance of ensuring that the service that we provide is regularly evaluated and outcomes are monitored. This also aims to ensure that each young person's individual journey is captured from the onset, measuring and monitoring areas of strength and difficulty, to ensure that Therapeutic Action Plans can be tailored accordingly. Such outcomes also allow the service to work towards realistic, collaborative goals, capture change and evidence overall therapeutic progress. This provides a forum to celebrate achievements and success. In addition, outcomes collated are then used to inform future service development.

Within the service we have developed an Outcomes Framework that includes:

- The use of psychometric measures which capture the views of the young people and foster carers.
- Goal-Based Outcomes (GBO) for each young person that are realistic and agreed with key professionals. These GBOs can capture several factors such as length of placement, access/engagement with education, and decrease in risk-related behaviours.
- The monitoring of key target attachment behaviours of young people and capturing frequency and severity of each behaviour (Psychological Assessment and Monitoring System, Changing Minds UK)
- Capturing the child's journey through their story.
- Gaining feedback forms for the service obtained from relevant stakeholders such as commissioners, social care, and the staff team.
-

We also ensure that our therapeutic approach is evidence based and current, drawing on guidelines and other relevant literature. We recognize 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)³ for supporting young people with attachment difficulties and aligned to the notion of 'redefining therapy' as outlined by Rogers et al, 2011⁴. 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 prioritize 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 (Ryan & Mitchell, 2011; Golding, 2012; Golding, 2013)⁵⁶⁷, that is, developmentally informed and grounded in attachment and trauma theory.



Helping to Build and Maintain Connections

We recognise that relationships and a sense of belonging within the system is integral for young people, foster carers and the NW fostering team. Therefore, we aim to develop trusting compassionate relationships and provide a high level of attuned, sensitive support to support this process. One of the core principles of the framework is that foster carers, alongside the young person, are at the centre of the intervention, recognising that they have a key role in developing the environment and relationships that can manage risk, help young people to feel safe, and support the young person to facilitate change.

WRAP service

At Northwest Fostering we also deliver a WRAP service that supports children and young people who are in Local Authority/IFA fostering placements whose placements are at risk of breakdown. This service utilises the underlying theory and support within the Northwest Fostering service: The HOMES Framework is designed to maximize stability for young people. This is a therapeutic support service that is offered to children and young people not placed with the agency.

The WRAP service is tailored to meet the individual needs of each family and young person referred and works closely with professionals already offering support to the young person. Goals and targets are identified in collaboration with the referrer and other professionals involved for each individual case. Individualised Therapeutic Action Plans are tailored to work towards achieving these goals.

The WRAP service intervention is time limited and there is no requirement for Northwest Fostering to provide foster carers as part of this provision.



Section 2 - Service Registration Details

Name and address of the Registered Provider

Northwest Fostering

Unit 15, 6th Floor

St James' House

Pendleton Way

Salford Manchester

M6 5FW

Tel: 0161 707 8508

E-mail: northwestfostering@actionforchildren.org.uk

Responsible Individual.

Colette Ferns

Head of Fostering & Adoption Action for Children

Registered Manager.

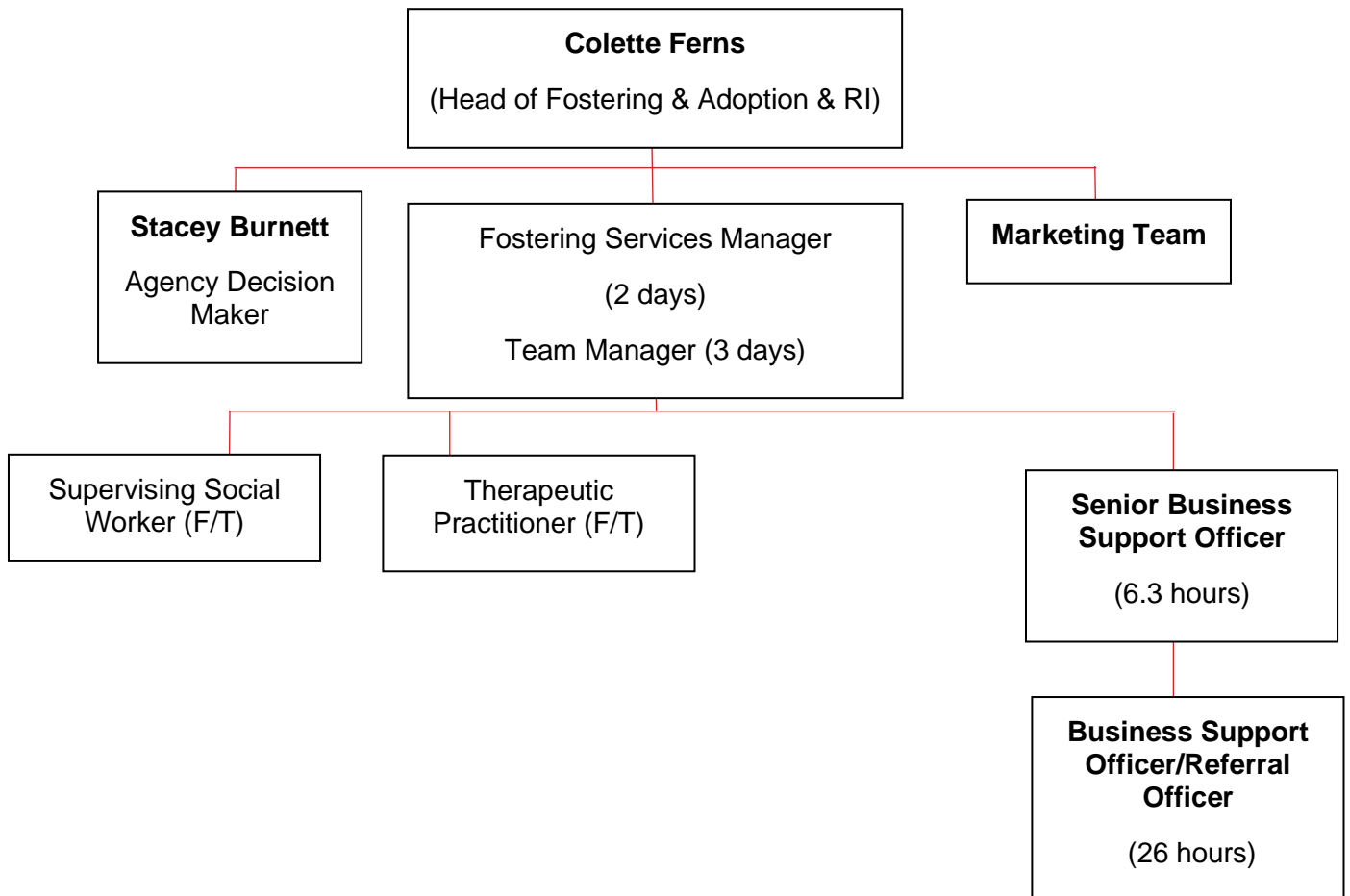
Adrienne Cronin

Qualifications: Dip SW, PQ Part 1 Programme, ILM5.

The Registered Manager has significant experience in both the voluntary and Local Authority sector with particular experience working within the areas of disability, young carers and fostering, including evidence-based programmes.



Section 3 - Service Staff Structure





Job roles and qualifications

Fostering Service Manager/Registered Manager

The Fostering Service manager and registered manager for Northwest fostering is a professionally qualified Social Worker registered Social Work England and is working towards a management qualification. 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 organisation. 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 Managers

Team Managers are professionally qualified Social Workers registered with Social Work England 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. The Team Manager acts as the Panel Advisor.

The Recruitment and Assessment Manager which is a national role covering Fostering England is responsible for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers.

Supervising Social Workers

Social Workers are qualified, experienced social workers and registered with Social Work England. They are responsible for the supervision and support of foster carers and monitoring the welfare and progress of children and young people living with Foster Carers. They prepare reports for foster carer's annual reviews, run support groups, and participate in delivering training. Social workers also support with recruitment of foster carers by carrying out initial visits to applicants and Form F assessments.

Therapeutic Practitioner – WRAP

Our Therapeutic Practitioners work directly with children and young people, parents, and foster carers, providing a range of therapeutic models via individual/group sessions and training. Supporting young people within their foster / Wrap placements they are responsible



for delivering high quality therapeutic intervention to children and young people with trauma history and complex needs and their carers.

Young Person's Practitioners

Our Young Person's Practitioners work directly with the child and young people in the service. They focus on developing children and young people's confidence and competence around social skills and emotional regulation. In addition, they also support children and young people understand risks which they may be placing themselves in and complete direct work to alleviate the level of risk.

These workers also work with birth families to help them support the child/young person in placement. They help families reflect on and understand the needs of their child and how best to maintain connections with them through contact. The worker also works directly with foster carers where necessary to support the work of the Clinical Psychologist to reinforce their reflective learning and emotional regulation.

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/Referral 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 2 qualified Social Workers registered with Social Work England.

There is a range of experience in the team from 2 to 30 years' experience in fostering and social care including child-care social work and safeguarding.



Section 4 - Services Provided

Short Breaks (Planned Breaks)

Foster carers who provide short break / respite placements either on a regular basis or one-off holiday breaks. These can be for children living at home with their birth parents, children within our full-time placements or children from other fostering agency placements.

Short-term

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

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.

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.

Staying Put Arrangements

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

Section 5 - 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 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 qualified 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 are exceptional reasons why this is not possible, for example, a significant change in the prospective foster carer's 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's North & Northwest Fostering Panel. This is a shared panel that hears panel business from both fostering services. Both Registered Managers have oversight of panel procedures and processes. Applicant(s) attend panels.

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 because 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).

Reviews may also take place at other times for example because 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

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.
- Access to a specialist fostering help and advice out of office hours support telephone line.



- 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 / or Buddy Support.
- Events for children in placement, carers children and carers.
- Support/activity groups for carers children
- 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, a short break service to provide alternative experiences / respite 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.

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:

- Radicalization
- Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Identity
- Managing Allegations
- Child Exploitation
- Safer Caring
- Administration of Medication
- Understanding Sensory Processing Difficulties
- Understanding Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.
- Behaviour Management
- Recording
- First Aid



Our current training offer is further enhanced by virtual online training from Kate Cairns & monthly access to training from our psychological support service, Changing Minds. This training is focused on the use of trauma informed practice, attachment theory and a range of evidence-based therapies including Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Theraplay, and PACE.

Section 6: 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
- Regular audits
- 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/ 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 the Northwest Fostering was assessed with a Judgement Outcome of 'GOOD' on the 13/07/2022.

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

Action for Children Senior management team: Tim O'Neil, 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/