



Action for Children Statement of Purpose

Service: Fostering South West

Date: November 2023

Registered: Independent Fostering Agency

Registration Body: Ofsted

Registration Number: SC031085



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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.

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 (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

Action for Children South West Fostering Service

Aims

We endeavour to create a fostering service where children are central to the service and where the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people are of prime importance. We aim to offer responsive, rather than reactive care-giving and always will seek sensitive resolutions to matters that arise. Foster care provided to children unable to reside within their birth families, will be offered through well-matched and emotionally available fostering families able to effectively care for traumatised children. We offer an approach that above all is child centred and focuses upon offering stable and quality homes that will enhance children's life chances.

As a team we understand the support required for fostering homes. We identify when and how such support is best offered. We appreciate the importance of growth and development for both foster carers and staff in order to meet the challenges of fostering and offer the best possible care to children. The welfare of the child is inextricably linked with the welfare of the foster carer.

Action for Children's fostering service aims to exceed the standards and criteria outlined within Ofsted's framework for inspection. As a team we identify best standards of day-to-day practice in accordance with Legislation and National Minimum Standards. All policies and procedures are actively promoted, revised, and underpin all our work. At Action for Children, we recognise the central importance of foster care as the foundation for transforming the lives of children.

We are working across our England Fostering Services to implement the HOMES framework - Building supportive homes for children with complex histories of attachment disruption, neglect, abuse and trauma

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



Objectives and Outcomes

1. To develop a cohesive professional staff/carer team working together to provide the highest possible quality of service having the child's welfare as paramount in all our decisions.
2. To provide fostering homes for children and young people that offer stability and consistent experiences of a safe, warm and caring family life to enhance their potential.
3. To provide a responsive, child-centred, supportive and professional 24 hour service for foster carers, looked after children and purchasers.
4. To ensure the voice of the child is heard and is integrated into all aspects and areas of practice throughout the organisation.
5. To recruit and retain fostering families from diverse backgrounds ensuring choice of fostering home options for children and young people in order to meet their needs.
6. To ensure staff and carers have regular staff meetings/carer groups/forums, are supervised on a regular basis, at a minimum of monthly, individually and with access to consultations from our clinical psychologist
7. To promote the educational achievement of children and young people enabling them to benefit from a variety of educational activities and social interests.
8. Promote a healthy lifestyle linked with meeting emotional and physical needs of children.
9. Promoting family time with birth families and significant friends.
10. Personal Development Plans and Performance Appraisals will be carried out at a minimum of once a year for all staff/carers.
11. To collate an overall development/training plan for the service.
12. To ensure all staff/carers are able and have the opportunity to voice their individual and/or collective worries, concerns, suggestions etc. by whatever means appropriate e.g. group meetings, individual meetings, whistle blowing.
13. To ensure that staff/carers provide up to date reports for management and regulatory compliance reporting alongside preparing professional reports for other agencies if/when required.
14. To continually and consistently develop, review and evaluate quality of service provided. Any shortfalls in practice should be immediately identified and addressed.
15. To treat everyone with dignity and respect; to be inclusive in all aspects of our service delivery both internally and externally.

Section 2-Service Registration Details

Name and address of the Registered Provider

Action for Children - Fostering South West

Horner Court

637 Gloucester Road

Horfield

Bristol

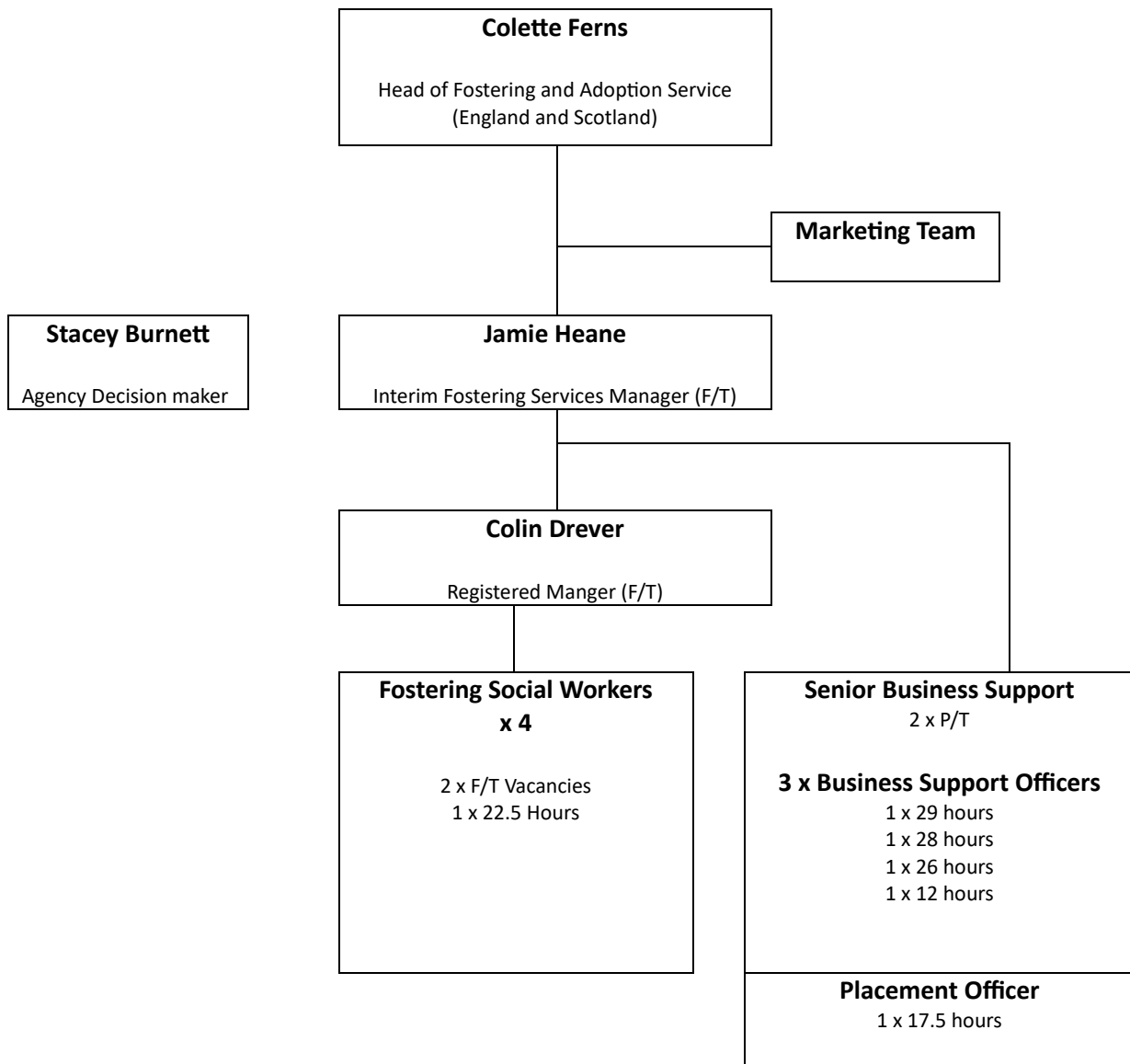
BS7 0BJ

Telephone: 0117-958-0158

E-mail: FosteringWest.BSO@actionforchildren.org.uk

Out of Hours: 01642-226-372

Section 3- Service Staff Structure



Job roles and qualifications

Responsible Individual- Colette Ferns

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

Tel: 01923 361 500

PQ Certificate Management and Leadership University of West of Scotland

PQ Certificate Child Protection Studies Dundee University

CQSW Queens College, Glasgow

BA Social Science Paisley College of Technology (now University of West of Scotland)

Colette's background is Local Authority (fostering, adoption, kinship and family support) and adult/child protection - spanning 35 years

Colette has been responsible for Action for Children's Scotland Fostering services since 2018 and in 2022 took over responsibility for the Fostering England Services.

Agency Decision Maker - Stacy Burnett

Stacy is SWE registered.

The Agency Decision Maker makes quality and appropriate decisions in relation to the panel's recommendations in line with the over-riding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care. The Agency Decision Maker is professionally qualified and has extensive child care experience.

Fostering Service Manager (Interim) – Jamie Heane

Bsc (Hons) Social Work

Level 5 diploma – 'Children Young People and Families Manager'

Jamie is SWE Registered

Jamie has held a variety of roles within Action for Children since 2013 ranging from Fostering Social Worker, Panel Advisor, Registered Manager, Recruitment & Assessment Manager and Fostering Service Manager.

Registered Manager - Colin Drever

(Currently awaiting OFSTED interview for Registered Manager)

Commenced employment with Action for Children 26/7/21

Diploma in Social Work

Institute of Leadership and Management Level 5

Colin is SWE registered.

Colin started his social work career in childcare and child protection. He has extensively worked within the sector of Independent Fostering Agencies for 20 years in a variety of practitioner and management roles. He is currently employed as South West Team Manager whilst awaiting his registered Managers interview.

Zara Slaney (part time) – a/w write up to add here

BSC Honours in Social Welfare 2000

Zara joined AFC in May 23.

Zara has worked in Child care since qualifying in 2007. Zara has worked extensively in the LAC team 2007-14 and the Family Support Team 2019-23.

Zara is Social Work England Registered.

Senior Business Support Officer (2 x part-time) and Business Support Officers (4 part-time) plus Referrals Officer (1 x part-time)

These posts assist across the service and provide important administration and business support to the team.

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 and Recruitment 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 one Support Services officer who manage all engagement calls from enquirers and book Initial Visits with project staff. They also support projects to facilitate local information events.

Section 4-Services Provided

Fostering Home types provided

Emergency and Unplanned fostering

Wherever possible fostering homes are planned, but there are circumstances where a child may require a fostering home in an emergency. We have carers who can provide unplanned / emergency care for individual children or sibling groups. Referrals are required to be made within office hours.

Planned Breaks

We have foster carers who provide planned break fostering 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 fostering or children from other fostering agency homes

Short-term

Short-term fostering can last several years whilst long-term plans are being formulated.

Bridging

We provide homes with foster carers who are experienced in 'bridging' children to adoption, permanent fostering or independence. Bridging foster homes form part of a long-term plan for the child and can last up to two years.

Long-term/permanency

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

Disabled children and young people

We provide specialist placements for children and young people who have a severe learning difficulty, a physical disability or who need complex medical care. The team has extensive experience in making successful long-term placements as well as supporting children on a Short Breaks basis.

Parent and Child

We hope to develop this specialised form of fostering into 2023/24 for parents in order to support and assist them in developing parenting skills. Foster carers can assist local authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo Placements

Solo foster homes 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.

Siblings

Many of our carers can care for large sibling groups to enable children to stay together.

Specialist

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

Unaccompanied Children

We can provide foster carers who have the skills in providing for children/young people who are unaccompanied from overseas.

Staying Put Arrangements

These are to enable young people to remain in their foster home 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 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 to discuss in more detail the work of the Service and to answer any queries or concerns the enquirer may have. In discussion with the manager a decision will be reached as to whether it 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, safeguarding, birth family contact and child development. All applicants are required to attend.

The completed assessment report is presented to the Action for Children **South West Fostering Panel. Applicants attend Panel.**

Fostering Panel read the report and hear from the presenting social worker and applicants before making a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster carers. Panel recommendations subsequently are passed to a Senior Manager in Action for Children, who is nominated as the organisation's 'Agency Decision Maker', who has the final decision about 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 a 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 also may 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

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 home 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.
- Clinical Consultations with carers/staff
- Clinical training
- 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 planned break service to provide alternative experiences / planned break for the child and a planned break for the main carer/s.
- 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.

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 for full time and 18 months for Short Break / planned break foster carers.

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:

- Safeguarding
- Whistleblowing
- reporting and recording
- data protection
- first aid
- managing complex behaviour
- attachment and development course 6 weeks
- trauma
- secondary trauma
- health and safety
- relationship and sexual health
- child exploitation
- anti-radicalisation and extremism
- resilience building
- self-esteem & identity
- life story work
- managing and promoting contact
- equality and diversity
- drugs and alcohol awareness
- education and health
- anti-radicalisation
- anti-bullying
- missing from care

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
- 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 South West Fostering Service was assessed with a Judgement Outcome of 'Requires Improvement to be Good' on the 3 March 2023 (SW Fostering)

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 Mike Knight, Chief People Officer,
email: whistleblowing@actionforchildren.org.uk

Action for Children Senior management team: Paul Carberry, Chief Executive Officer – paul.carberry@actionforchildren.org.uk, Tim O'Neill, Managing Director Childrens Services – Tim.O'Neill@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 Steve Bell 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/