



Action for Children Statement of Purpose

Service:

Family Breaks Devon & Fostering South West Peninsula

Date: October 2023

Registered: Independent Fostering Agency

Registration Body: Ofsted

Registration Number: SC064273



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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 Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 and the 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 children and young people, staff, placing authorities, foster carers and prospective foster carers.

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 values and purpose

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 that supports more than 760,000 children and their families each year.

Action for Children is an established and well-known provider of Fostering Services. We 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.
Colette.Ferns@actionforchildren.org.uk

Head Office

Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford, WD18 8AG. Tel: 01923 361 500

Aims, objectives and outcomes

Action for Children Family Breaks Devon & Fostering South West Peninsula

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 fostering homes that will enhance children's life chances.

Alongside our fostering service we also offer a short breaks service to children with disabilities. This service aims to offer a safe, positive home-from-home experience to children in which they can try new activities, develop their independence skills, and have fun in another family environment.

As a team we understand the support required for fostering. 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 strive to develop our day to day practice, we ensure compliance with legislation through monitoring and regular reviews, and seek to exceed National Minimum Standards learning from research and from the feedback of our service users. 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.

Our practice is informed by understanding of attachment and trauma, and the impact of trauma on children's development. We have developed a therapeutic service and our carers are trained in the Nurturing Attachments approach (Golding, 2013), with access to consultations with a psychologist specialising in the needs of children in foster care.

We are working across our England Fostering Services to implement the HOMES framework which uses the principles of PACE (Hughes 2004; Golding 2013; Hughes, Golding and Hudson 2015 and elsewhere) and has been developed between Action for Children and psychologists. Its focus is on building supportive homes for children with complex histories of attachment disruption, neglect, abuse and trauma.

A five-stage model of support, as follows, makes up the Homes Framework:

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 partners
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 options for children and young people in order to meet their needs.
6. To ensure staff and carers have regular training, staff training, 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. To promote a healthy lifestyle linked with meeting emotional and physical needs of children.
9. To promote family time with birth families and significant friends.
10. Personal Development Plans and Performance Appraisals will be reviewed 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 value and celebrate difference, and 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

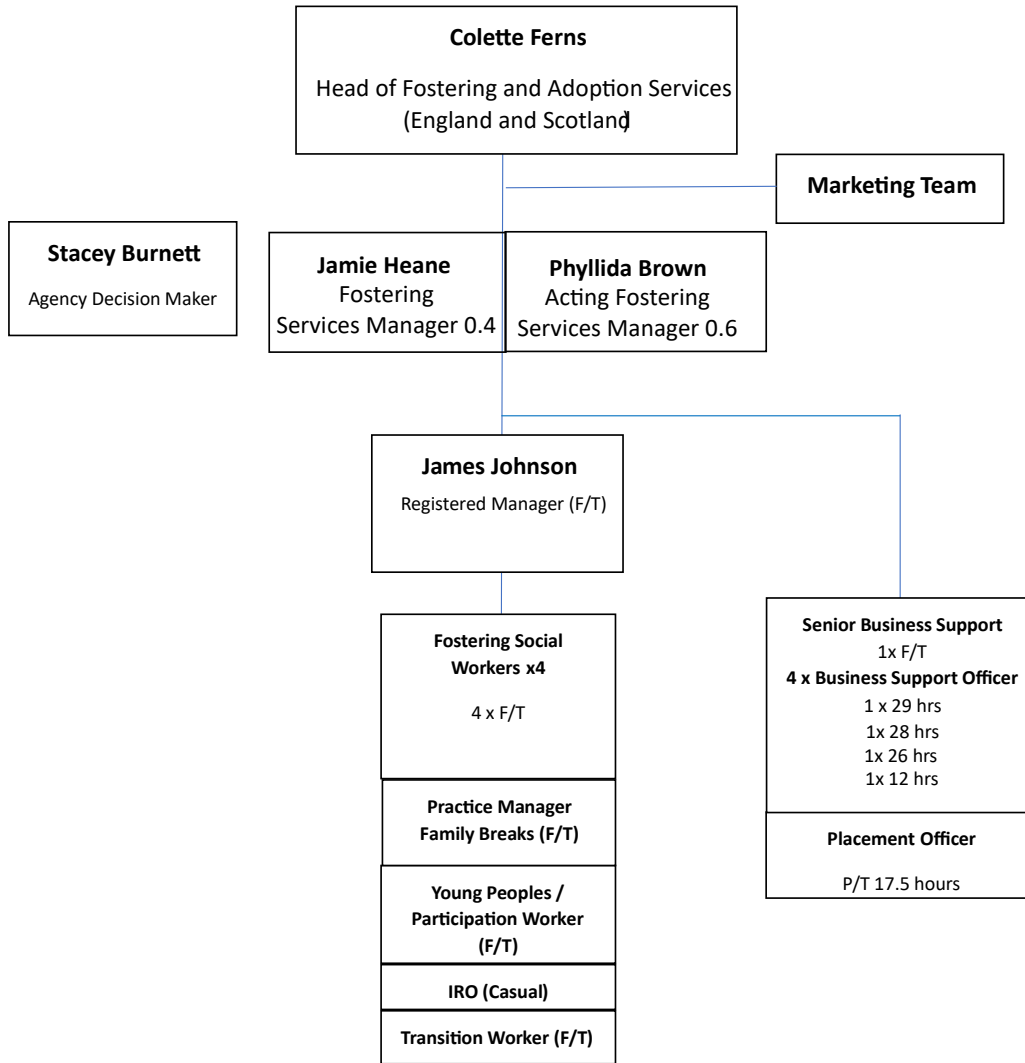
Family Breaks Devon & Fostering South West Peninsula

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Park Five Business Centre
Harrier Way,
Exeter
EX2 7HU
Telephone: 01392 360865

E-mail: Fosteringwest.bso@actionforchildren.org.uk

Out of Hours: 01642-226372

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-Stacey Burnett

Stacey 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 and fostering management experience.

Fostering Service Manager Jamie Heane

Jamie has a social worker qualification and a Level 5 qualification in Leadership/Management.

Acting Fostering Service Manager Phyllida Brown

Phyllida has degree in Human Sciences, a CQSW and an MA in Applied Social Studies.

She has a Level 5 CACHE Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Young People's Services (England) Children and Young People's Management Pathway.

Registered Manager James Johnson

MA in Social Work

BSc (Hons) Politics with Sociology Human Sciences

Working towards Level 5 CACHE Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services (England) Children and Young People's Management Pathway.

All social work staff are SWE registered.

Fostering Social Worker – Rachel Bachar (Full Time)

MA Social Work

Fostering Social Worker – Sharon Jeffery (Full Time)

BA Social Work

Fostering Social Worker – Deborah White (Full Time)

BA Social Work

Fostering Social Worker – Imogen Cox (Full Time)

BA Social Work

IRO Social Worker - South West Peninsula – Hayley Griffiths Jones (Casual)

MA Social Work

Practice Manager – Family Breaks – Andrew Fitzell (Full Time)

Registered Paediatric Nurse

Higher National Diploma in Child Health

Young people’s participation worker – Keeley Willicott (Full Time)

Level 2 Certificate for the Children and Young Peoples Workforce

Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People’s Workforce

Level 2 Employment Responsibilities and Rights in Children and Young Peoples settings

Level 2 Key Skills in Communication and Application of Numbers

Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care

Care Certificate

Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care – Medication in Settings

Young people’s worker for transition to adulthood – Gerry Tomlinson Vacancy: Recruitment in progress (0.5 FTE)

Senior Business Support Officer (Full-time) and Business Support Officers (Four part-time 29, 28, 26 & 12 hours)

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 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.

Section 4-Services Provided

Placement types provided

Short breaks

We offer a service for children with disabilities who access regular short breaks and a home-from-home with our skilled specialist carers. The carers work closely with the child’s family to ensure their individual needs are carefully met. The service offers safe, regulated care, but also fun and new opportunities, to some of our most vulnerable young people.

Short-term

Short-term fostering can last for varying periods whilst long-term plans are being formulated.

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 fostering homes for children and young people who have a learning difficulty, neurological/behavioural needs such as autistic spectrum condition, a physical disability or who need complex medical care. The team has extensive experience in making successful long-term fostering homes as well as supporting children on a Short Breaks basis as described above. Carers receive specialist training.

Parent and Child

Since 2009 we have provided parent and child assessment arrangements to local authorities. Carers' logs and a weekly summary written by social workers are provided to the local authority and an assessment report can be commissioned if the local authority is not preparing its own report. Carers receive specialist training.

Solo Fostering

Solo fostering homes are offered to children who could be a risk to other children and young people, or whose needs are such that carers cannot offer enough support if other children are present.

Sibling Fostering

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

Bridging

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

Planned breaks

Children and young people placed with our carers or another provider can access planned breaks with one of our carer households, in a regular arrangement with their main carers – similar to an extended family -to help sustain the stability of their main placement.

Specialist Fostering

Our carers also provide homes 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

Several of our foster carers are able to provide placements for children/young people who are unaccompanied from overseas.

Staying Put Arrangements

These are to enable young people to remain in their homes post 18 to 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, 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 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, the majority of 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, registered with Social Work England 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 South 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 organisation'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).

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:

Quarterly monitoring reports to trustees and regulators (NMS 25)

Weekly safeguarding tracker, meeting and reports

Monthly monitoring and reporting of Schedule 6 events

Review of all Schedule 7 notifiable events

Regular file audits

Annual monitoring and self evaluation report (Regulation 35)

- Carer(s)' Annual Reviews
- Carers' Consultation by online questionnaire and at groups
- Child's Feedback via Mind of My Own and other means
- Annual staff appraisals
- Monthly supervision of carer(s)
- Monthly supervision of staff
- Feedback from carers regarding training
- 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
- Contract monitoring processes (meetings and reports) to commissioners

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.'

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 Fostering Services Regulations, and the Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015

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 Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Fostering agencies are assessed at one of four levels: -

Outstanding / Good / Requires Improvement to be Good/Inadequate

The last inspection of Family Breaks Devon & Fostering South West Peninsula was graded Good (28-31 March 2022, report published March 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'Neill, Managing Director: Operations – Tim.O'Neill@actionforchildren.org.uk

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/