

**Action for Children
Fostering-
England North**

Statement of Purpose



Action for Children – Fostering England North Statement of Purpose

Status and Constitution

Action for Children, the children's charity, Registered Charity No.1097940, helps the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential. Action for Children is an established provider of Fostering Services. Action for Children has a network of projects around the UK delivering a range of high quality, successful foster placements, which meet and exceed the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Action for Children – Fostering England North is a specialist family placement service providing safe, secure and successful foster placements for the most vulnerable children and young people experiencing complex needs and/or challenging behaviour and/or disabilities.

Accordingly all the policies, procedures and standards of Action for Children are implemented, and Action for Children Children's Services directorate support, including line management, finance, human resources and physical asset management, are provided from Action for Children Head office At 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG Tel: 01923 361500.

Service sites Action for Children – Fostering England North:

Middlesbrough

Cargo Fleet offices
Middlesbrough Road
Middlesbrough
TS6 6XH

Tel: 01642 249 452
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Out of hours number:
01642 226372
E-mail:

fosteringmiddlesbrough@actionforchildren.org.uk

Yorkshire and Humber

Unit1
Nidd House
Sidings Court
Doncaster
DN4 5NL

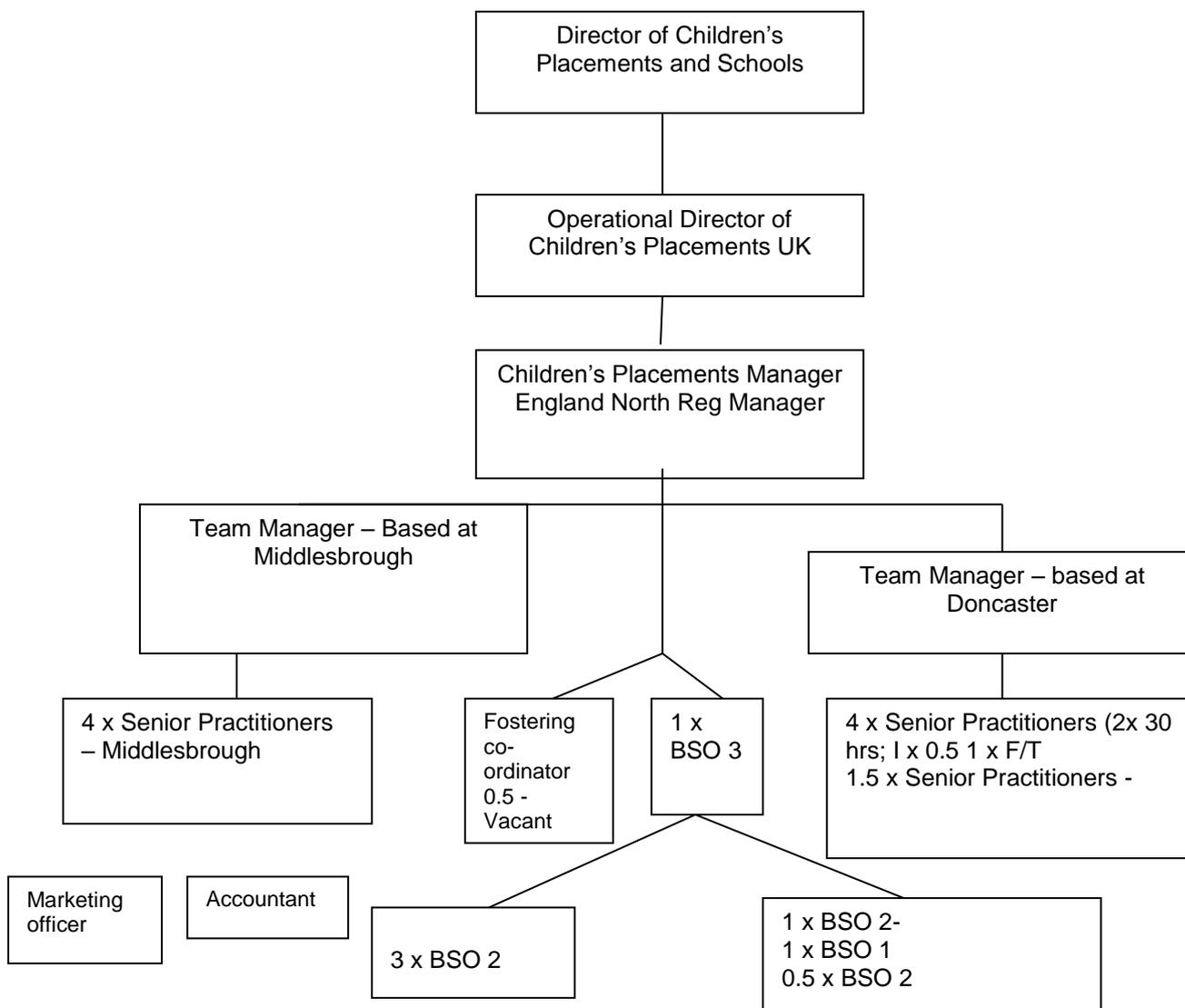
01302 320 016

E-Mail:

fosteringsheffield@actionforchildren.org.uk

An additional site was opened in 2014 in Manchester – Peel Green House, 696 Liverpool Road Eccles Manchester M30 7LP Tel: 016173078508 developed with Manchester city Council to offer Treatment Foster Care – Oregon placements. However a separate application has been submitted since Sept 2014 to register this as a service in its own right. This site will be line managed as a branch of the North service while the application is processed.

Management Structure:



Operational Management of the Service:

Action for Children Fostering has overarching policies and procedures maintained electronically to ensure they remain continually current which are followed by all of the UK services and amended where required by law for each country (Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland) England North operating as one service registered under Middlesbrough office follow the policies/procedures and guidance of Action for Children. The teams of Managers, Senior Practitioners and Business Support Officers use the same administrative procedures with common tasks for operations being performed across the whole of the region e.g. the distribution of vacancy information or the administration of

panel. Senior Practitioners also share common tasks across the region for example out of hours cover and foster carer training.

Foster carers and staff are training in accordance with the centrally developed Learning and Development Strategy and provision; training is delivered in venues local to the foster carers with some specialist carers have tailored made training according to the needs of the children they care for.

The Children's Placement Manager (CPM) and the 2 Team Managers (TM) for Middlesbrough and Yorkshire and Humber plan, co-ordinate and develop the work of the service together through regular management meetings. Staff, as well as holding individual, geographically determined meetings, meet together as a whole service quarterly to address issues and develop practice.

In addition the CPM meets with the other 4 CPM's from across the UK and the Directors ensuring a co-ordinated and centrally supported development of the service across the UK.

National whole service meetings are also held to ensure that practice is developed and work celebrated across the services.

Numbers, Relevant Qualifications and Experience of Staff

	Position	Appointed by Action for Children	Qualifications
Operational Director for Children's Placements – UK -RI			
	Operational Director Children's Placements	April 2014	CQSW
Children's Placement Manager		England North-RM	
	Children's Placement Manager	April 2010	BSc Hons. in Health and Social Care Dip. In Social Work Level 5 in Management (CMI) Certificate in Residential Work with Adolescents Adult Teaching Certificate

	Position	Appointed by Action for Children	Qualifications
Middlesbrough			
	Team Manager – North	1/12/2015 covering as agency manager currently	Dip SW qualified
	Fostering social worker	June 2003	CQSW Teaching Certificate Practice Teaching Accreditation
	Fostering social	Oct 1997	Diploma in Social Work

	worker		
	Fostering social worker	March 2012	BSC in Social work PQ award in social work
	Fostering social worker	September 2006	Diploma in Social Work
	BSO 2	November 2013	In service training
	BSO 2	September 2004	In service training CACDP British Sign Language 1 & 2

	Position	Appointed by Action for Children	Qualifications
Doncaster			
	Team Manager	Sept 2012	BA Hons in health and social welfare Dip Social Work
	Fostering social worker		
	Fostering social worker	March 2011	BSc Hons in Social Work Dip SW
	Fostering social worker 0.5	March 2011	BSc Hons in social Work CACHE Dip in Nursery Nursing NVQ level 3 in Management
	Fostering social worker	February 2009	BSc Social Work Diploma in Social Work PQ1 Award
	Fostering social worker	August 2007	BSC (Hons) Social Sciences MA Applied Social Studies / DIP SW PQCCA Practice Teaching Award
	Fostering social worker	September 2013	BA Hons in social work – open university. NQSW (newly qualified social worker) EPD – (early professional development) Level two (professional development) in social work NVQ 3 in early years care and education
	Senior Business Support Officer	November 2005	RSA 1/2/3 Word Processing (Distinction) City & Guilds 1 & 2 Word Processing; Spread sheets; Databases
	Business Support Officer	April 2015	In service training
	Business Support Officer	June 2010	In service training

Numbers of Foster Carers:

Action for Children Fostering England North commenced recruiting foster carers in May 2001; In 2014- 2015 there were 64 approved foster carer households across the service including respite carers.

Numbers of Children Placed:

In 2014-2015 there were 51 children and young people with varying needs including complex needs and/or challenging behaviour placed with the service's professional Foster Carers.

Services Provided

Action for Children – Fostering England North provides a range of services to children and young people aged mainly between the ages of 0 to 17 years. The Service is aimed at the most vulnerable children and young people in need of warm, sensitive and skilful care; who due to their complex, psychological, behavioural and/or physical needs, will have typically already had previous placements or will have been considered for residential care units, residential education establishments, secure units and other out of authority placements. We recognise that many of the children and young people referred to the Service will require higher levels of support and supervision and carers who have appropriate approach, level of skill and understanding.

We aim to recruit foster carers with demonstrable skills in caring for children and young people with a high level of need and offer a professional level of remuneration in recognition of the high level of commitment and qualities needed.

Our Senior Practitioners work alongside carers and ensure that placements are well supported. Using evidence based approaches to maintain positive placements they focus upon the needs of individual placements and will work with carers and young people to achieve good outcomes. With reflective supervision and coaching foster carers are able to provide a safe and nurturing environment to enable children and young people, where it is needed, to recover from past trauma and/or abuse and to engage more fully in their communities.

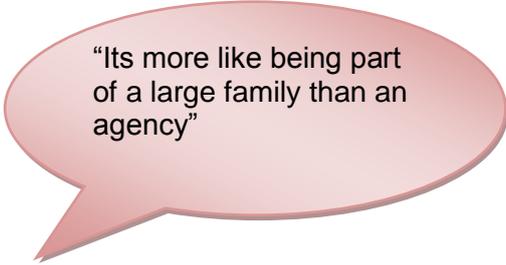
In recognition of the demands of caring for young people with complex and disrupted life histories, many of our Foster Carers will only have one young person placed with them at any time – although, where appropriate, may take occasional additional respite placements. The Service offers intensive support and supervision to its foster carers and there is a strong emphasis upon teamwork/ training/professional development and regular networking with key professionals to ensure positive outcomes for young people in placement. Foster carers receive monthly professional supervision with their allocated Senior Practitioner and can access psychological clinical supervision to enable them to successfully care for children and young people with histories of trauma and disrupted attachments. In addition quarterly progress meetings between the senior practitioner/foster carers and the child or young person in placement will detail the progress of the identified outcomes for the child or young person via the use of a developed tracker tool.

Carers are entitled to accrue 28 days paid planned breaks per year to enable them to enjoy some time away from fostering to recuperate from high levels of challenge

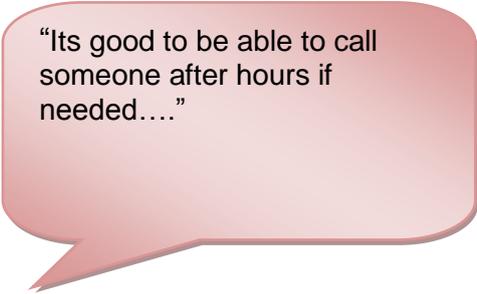
Our Foster carers have told us:



“We receive good communication and prompt help when needed”



“Its more like being part of a large family than an agency”



“Its good to be able to call someone after hours if needed....”



“We receive regular contact from the agency and have attended some well-presented useful training”

Through corporate links, Action for Children has been able to access additional support for children and young people in placement. This includes equipment; trips; and support with hobbies.

One of Action for Children’s central values is the active participation of young people in influencing the development of services. Fostering England North provides arts based activities in both groups and individually to enable the service to gain the views of young people. In addition young people are trained in interviewing for staff and take part in panels – an example of which was the recruitment of the previous team manager for Middlesbrough.

Transform Placements:

Working in partnership with Chrysalis Associates we provide therapeutic foster placements to meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs. These placements are currently in the Yorkshire area but it is the intention to extend the service across the region

The 2 year wrap around therapeutic package includes a therapeutic assessment of need; careful matching and planning; therapeutic interventions for foster carers and the child from the start of the placement; clinical supervision and support for the foster carer and workers for the child and psychological support for the schools of the children and young people in placement.

“I have been very moved by the dedication of your foster carers toward understanding and caring for some very troubled young people, and giving these children a positive experience of love and family, despite the challenges they present”

Dr Helen Freake – Consultant Psychologist, Chrysalis Associates

Growth

The service has ambitions to grow and develop the range of services offered across the region. The addition of a marketing officer for the North linked to the central marketing allows us to examine the needs of Local Authorities and children and young people in our region and develop services to meet need. Campaigns are planned across the year and RAG rated in terms of geographical priority. The service will actively develop Therapeutic and Child and Parent arrangements and placements across the region

Principles

The managers, staff and Foster Carers of Action for Children – Fostering England North operate under the Action for Children Code of Conduct, in accordance with the following key principles:

- Improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable children and young people by putting them first
- Promote ethical organisational practices
- Respect the environment and communities in which we operate
- Assure equality and diversity
- Provide healthy and safe working environments
- Respect human rights and operate ethically
- Use our resources responsibly and efficiently

Types of Placements available:

- Solo placements for children and young people with significant individual needs
- Permanent fostering, with the possibility of extending beyond 18 and offering a ‘staying put’ – family for life
- Short-term, task focussed placements
- Emergency placements made within 48 hours of referral
- Respite placements
- Placements for siblings
- Placements for older children
- Placements for children with disabilities
- Therapeutic placements
- Child and Parent placements
- Contract care and short break placements

Creating Positive Outcomes:

Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

Action for Children's updates Behaviour Support Policy was introduced in 2010. Using the 'My Plan' children/young people and foster carers agree rewards that will be given for positive behaviours and identify how foster carers will help children and young people deal with times where their challenging behaviour is used to demonstrate difficult feelings.

Action for Children places great emphasis in understanding what is important for children emotionally and foster carers are trained in attachment theory and the principles of therapeutic re-parenting (PACE –Dan Hughes model) to ensure that their responses to children remain *Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathic* at all times.

Safeguarding children

Action for Children aims to take great care in recruiting carers to ensure that the placements we provide are safe for children. As part of the assessment process applicants have to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check in addition to checks with Local and Health Authorities where applicants have resided. Applicants supply details of referees who can comment on their ability to look after children and we request written references as well as undertaking reference visits. Any significant ex-partners of each applicant are contacted in particular those with whom applicants have looked after children or had children of their own. Applicants will also be subject to medical checks. All of this information will inform the assessment service.

The service is committed to sound planning when making placements and will forward all information obtained from the Local Authority to inform the matching process. The service will work with referring social workers to complete and assessment of risk and a comprehensive matching pro-forma. The service aims to always include children and young people within the matching process and seek their views.

Every foster family has a Safer Care Plan which takes into account the specific needs of the fostered child and the family with whom they are placed. This plan along with the risk assessment and health and safety checks are updated regularly.

The service's Senior Practitioners spend time some time along with children and young people placed on a regular basis and create positive relationships to enable them to raise any concerns they may have about their placement. Every child or young person is given information on how to make a complaint or raise any concerns they are unhappy about via literature and verbally. The service seeks feedback from children and young people for foster carer's reviews using methods appropriate to age and level of engagement.

Numbers of Complaints and their Outcomes

Action for Children – Fostering England North applies Action for Children's Complaints procedure.

In 2014- 2015 the service received 4 complaints, all of which were resolved satisfactorily for the complainant.

Children missing from care

The service provides information for children about what to expect if they go missing from their foster placement. Foster carers are provided with clear guidance on what to do in this eventuality and 24 hour support is available from the service to assist carers in crisis. Each incident of a child or young person going missing is risk assessed to determine the level of risk and concern. Each absence is reported to the service, the placing authority and to the Police if warranted. Local police service procedures are known to each foster carer as well as the expectations of the placing authority

Promoting good health and well-being

Children and young people will be registered with a GP and Dentist local to their placement address. Foster carers encourage healthy eating, fitness and enjoyment. Carers have access to a psychologist who can offer advice on how to understand emotional needs and behaviours and offer suggestions for helping children to feel safe and relaxed and allow the carer to take care of them.

The service builds positive relationships with adults and services who are key to the child's welfare so that they have a full picture to support foster carers to look after children and young people placed with them.

Leisure activities

Action for children foster carers look for a child's unique talents and support the child to explore and develop. Children are encouraged and supported to take part in diverse leisure activities, helping them to find out what they like to do and try new things. All activities are undertaken safely, taking account of a child's needs and abilities.

Children with disabilities are supported to access community based activities and have a full range of childhood experiences during their short breaks.

Action for Children's fundraising service has developed 'My Action for Children' as a method of raising funds for all children and young people accessing services. Examples of how this has helped children in fostering placements are the funding of equipment to assist with education such as laptops and sports equipment as well as theatre trips and trips to These parks.

Promoting Educational Attainment

Action for Children understands that may fostered children face obstacles to achieve at school. It is a priority for the service to give support /encouragement and any practical help we can to ensure we can assist in the removal of such obstacles.

Taking learning from Research in Practice we monitor placements to ensure that carers and staff are employing all available strategies know to work in supporting fostered children's education.

Carers and Action for Children staff will work with schools and advice can be given by the consultant psychologist to help teachers understand how best to support children who are fostered within the classroom setting. Carers work to advocate on behalf of fostered children to gain the support they need to achieve their potential.

Young People's achievements are celebrated and vouchers are given for attainment in effort and exam results.

Promoting independence and Adult Life Skills

Wherever possible, young people with a foster family at 18 years of age will be enabled to stay with the family until they are ready to move on. This is made possible by negotiating with the Placing Authority for on-going financial support, or for carers to convert to a supported lodgings provider. Where this is not possible carers will offer to remain in touch with the young person and give on-going support.

The service however recognises the reality and challenges for young people leaving care. Foster carers encourage young people to learn life skills throughout their placements from learning to cook, opening bank account, learning about tenancies and benefits as they approach independence. The service has 'Barclays Money Skills' packs available to work with young people on budgeting and saving for the future.

Action for Children has a well-developed toolkit and training manual – 'Key to the door' for carers to use with young people to gain credits and qualifications recognised by accommodation providers as evidence of their ability to manage a tenancy. The evidence also informs the Pathway Planning process and identifies where the gaps are in a young person's independence skills.

Providing high quality foster carers and placements:

Recruitment of Foster Carers

Action for Children – Fostering England North seeks to recruit foster carers throughout the North East and Yorkshire. Recruitment is achieved through a variety of methods by joint working between our team managers and our marketing officer, including newspaper adverts, via use of the Internet, through distribution of posters and leaflet and holding events.

Enquiries are logged on our CHARMS system with all relevant basic details then an Information Pack is sent to enquirers, which details the recruitment, preparation and approval processes. This is followed up by an initial visit and then allocation to an assessing social worker, if appropriate.

The interests of the children involved are paramount and their safety and well-being is the first duty of the fostering service. As a consequence, prospective foster carers are carefully and thoroughly assessed by means of a competency-based assessment in a way which is fair, transparent and respectful. A wide range of potential foster carers are welcome (except in the case of those with certain criminal convictions). Our recruitment process enables us to approve a variety of safe, skilled carers who offer a range of strengths and parenting abilities.

We aim to recruit foster care households across the North of England in locations which can be served from our existing office bases in Middlesbrough, and Doncaster. The service is currently working in partnership with several local authorities to recruit and support specialist carers to fulfil specific placement needs.

Preparation of Foster Carers

Prospective foster carers who proceed with an application undertake *Skills to Foster* Preparation course which is delivered in modules. The Preparation Training explores the following areas:

- *What do foster carers do?*
- *Identity and Life Chances*
- *Working with others*
- *Understanding children in foster care*
- *Safer Caring*
- *Transitions*

The service includes young people with carer experiences and approved and experienced foster carers in the training.

Assessment of Foster Carers

Foster carers are comprehensively assessed using the BAAF competency based assessment format. We encourage applicants to contribute directly to the gathering of evidence to demonstrate competencies.

Approval of Foster Carers

Action for Children has a Fostering Panel which meets in either Middlesbrough or Leeds on a monthly basis. Our Panel is constituted in keeping with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and has representation which includes Action for Children social workers, managers, and independent representatives including a foster carer, an individual with user experience of foster care, local authority managers and practitioners. The Fostering Panel is chaired independently. Our current Chair is Phillip . Prospective foster carers are invited to attend part of the Panel Meeting where their application is being considered.

Foster carer approval is subject to annual review and additional carer reviews will be held where any complaints or allegations arise or at the request of foster carers. All Foster Carer Reviews will consider the views of placing social workers, young people who have been placed or are in placement as well as the carers and their supervising Senior Practitioner.

The service also has a Fostering Co-ordinator whose role is primarily that of Panel Advisor but who is also responsible for the recruitment, training and development of Panel members

Composition of panel:

Position on panel	Employed/self employed or volunteer
Chair	Self Employed
Independent Social Worker	Self employed
Independent	Self employed – foster carer LA
Independent	Self employed
Independent	Self employed
Agency advisor	Employed
Agency rep	Employed

Support and development of foster carers

Approved foster carers are normally visited on a fortnightly basis, and will receive additional support visits where required. Out of office hours support is provided to foster carers by Service staff who are available on a rota basis during evenings, weekends and bank holiday periods. Foster carers receive a formal monthly supervision with their Senior Practitioner. There are foster carers' support groups meeting each month in Middlesbrough and Doncaster

The Service is committed to encouraging the ongoing development of its foster carers and will work with foster carers to identify learning needs. The Service has implemented a carer induction programme and supports carers in achieving core post-approval training within the first year of approval. The Service seeks to deliver a relevant Training Programme each year which will include elements of core training and more specialist post-induction elements. Carers are required to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards. Action for Children foster carers are also supported to complete an NVQ 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

The Service's Senior Practitioners provide direct practical help to placements and are proactive in promoting children and young people's education, recreation and personal and social skills. In recognition of the intensive nature of placements, Action for Children foster carers are supported in taking planned breaks when they need to recharge batteries.

Matching and making placements

Action for Children – Fostering England North provides foster placements for children and young people aim to provide a range of placements so that children can be appropriately matched with foster carers with the appropriate skills, knowledge, family structure, ethnic background and geographical location. The service will work in partnership with children and placing authorities to increase the range of choice in placements.

The service is committed to sound planning when making placements and will ensure that good levels of information are sought from referring local authorities to inform the matching process. The Service will work with referring social workers in completing an assessment of risk and a comprehensive matching pro-forma. The service tries to involve children and young people within the matching process and seeks their views in relation to preferences.

In matching children to foster carers we will endeavour to match the needs of the child or young person to the skills, abilities and experiences of available foster carers. We also take into account family structures, and geographic location when considering matches. We consider the ethnic, cultural or religious needs of the child/young person

Once a child is matched with a foster family, we aim to promote the success of the placement by providing support to meet the particular needs of the foster child, in order to maintain the placement successfully.

Local Authority Social Workers comments include:

“The foster carers have certainly provided the young person with much needed stability and nurturing. YP is viewed

SC036242

“Information sharing, especially the placement agreements, excellent documents for respite carers to utilise.”

Children and young people have told us:

“They helped in every way”

“It has helped me trust people and to know what it is like to be a part of a family

“For the first time I do not have to worry about people judging me”

“it feels like being loved by someone I love”

Signed:

Children’s Placement’s Manager
Registered Manager

Date: 12/11/2015

Operational Director of Children’s Placements
Registered Individual

Date: 12/11/2015