Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Wessex Project

URN: SC039572
April 2017
Aims and Outcomes.

Aims.

Action for Children supports and speaks out for the UK’s most vulnerable and neglected children and young people, for as long as it takes to make a difference in their lives.

Fostering Wessex service provides a variety of foster placements to children and young people aged 0-18 years old. It provides long and short term foster placements to children and young people who experienced trauma, abuse and neglect. As a service, we provide standard and specialist foster placements. We are also currently in the process of implementing the use of the Attachment Therapeutic Approach within our foster placements.

Our foster carers and children and young people will receive a bespoke intervention drawn from five theoretical components which include: Early Trauma, Attachment Theory, Social Learning Theory, Systems theory, and Crisis Theory. The service continuously aims to provide safe, secure and stable family placements within the community so that the young person can experience a positive model of life for the future. Our visions and aims are also to ensure we fully understand our children and young people and their childhood experiences to provide a much more tailored plan to support their needs in particular their emotional needs to ensure they are able to build positive rapports and attachments with others.

Achieving positive outcomes for young people.

Action for Children is committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their full potential and to support them to achieve positive outcomes whilst they are placed in their foster care placements. All of the Action for Children staff as well as foster carers are focussed on supporting the young people to succeed and do well while they are in their foster placements, with a view to inspiring them to have high aspirations for themselves for the future, alongside acquiring practical day to day skills and feeling a sense of achievement.

Together with their foster carers, placing social workers, parents and Action for Children staff, the young people are involved in identifying achievable targets which are then monitored through review meetings, throughout foster carer supervision and through regular progress meetings or in weekly foster care and clinical meetings held for TFCO placements. All foster carers are given guidance by Action for Children through the foster carers’ electronic handbook and through their initial assessments and Skills to Foster training, of their role in supporting young people to achieve positive outcomes, as well as how to monitor progress. This will ensure the focus on reaching their full potential is always at the heart of the foster placement.

Young people who are placed or have been in placement with our foster carers have told us:

“[The foster carer] gave me so much confidence and I couldn’t be more grateful to her. Before [the foster placement] I was sectioned inside the hospital and I cannot express how much she helped my mental state and how much of a different person I am after being with her. If it wasn’t for her I will never have went for my GCSE exams... I wish for you to recognise what an amazing help she was to me. I cannot thank her enough for what she has done.”

“She definitely has my interests at heart, she shows genuine care for me. She is very interested in my education and health, is funny and makes me laugh. She reminds me of my nan which gives me comfort.”

At Action for Children and in our local project, young people's participation is highly valued and is at the forefront of our practice. Young people are involved in recruitment of staff and foster carers. A number of activities, such as Art Workshops, trips to theme parks as well as young people’s forums, take place throughout the year to give the young people opportunities to meet with all of the team and other looked after children, as well as to seek their views and feedback on their carers and on the service provided by the project and Action for Children.
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 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 and 2013.

All of Action for Children’s fostering services also implement the therapeutic attachment approach within their service delivery to ensure all foster carers and staff working with the children and young people truly understand the early experiences and traumas faced and experienced by the children and young people accessing the service.

Fostering Wessex Project was initially set up to provide remand foster care as an alternative to remand in secure or custody, however over the years the service developed to provide prevention of offending, post custody, Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) foster placements, and standard fostering. The project merged its registration in November 2015 with Intensive Fostering Wessex service, which was providing Intensive Fostering placements, using the TFCO model which was initially grant funded by the Youth Justice board and was later solely funded through the placing authorities. In November 2016, however, a review of the service was completed following notification from the main authorities and frameworks the service is contracted with, was received. The service was informed of the increasing need of therapeutic foster placements to be provided and Fostering Wessex, decided to start providing these foster placements as opposed to providing TFCO foster placements, which need continued to decrease over the past years. The service is currently in the process of implementing this service utilising the expertise and skills of existing staff. The service will also have a therapeutic lead practitioner and access to a Psychotherapist. Therapeutic Attachment training is delivered to our foster carers and staff, which directs Attachment Planning which is a unique evidence-informed approach to developing care planning for children and young people. This approach focusses on the recovery from developmental trauma and broken attachment to ensure children and young people are fully understood by their foster carers and those working with the child. Care is based on and attuned to the child’s emotional developmental needs which also informs the child’s care plan and statutory reviews. Within our services, 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, telephone 01923 361500.

Operational management of the service.

Action for Children Fostering has central policies and procedures which are followed by all staff members within the service.

Foster carers and staff are trained in accordance with our overarching Fostering Learning and Development framework and provision. Training is also delivered at venues local to the foster carers most often at the offices in Fareham.

The Fostering Service Manager and the Team Manager regularly meet to plan and coordinate the work and future development of the services provided by the project. Staff members are also involved in team meetings, practice meetings, and periodic service development days to seek and gain their feedback on the service and how best this can be further improved.
Registration.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position Held</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Date Commenced Working for Action for Children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laurie Long</td>
<td>Responsible Individual Operational Director for Fostering Services Full Time (37 hours)</td>
<td>Bsc (Hons) Sociology and Social Work&lt;br&gt;M.Phil Criminology&lt;br&gt;Diploma in Social Work&lt;br&gt;Diploma in Management</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christina Brandi</td>
<td>Registered Manager and Fostering Service Manager</td>
<td>Level 5 Diploma in health and social care leadership and Management completed in July 2013&lt;br&gt;Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work Specialist award in working with children, young people, their families and carers.&lt;br&gt;BSC Social Work Hons</td>
<td>21/05/2007 (as a social worker) and later appointed as Team Manager in September 2012</td>
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Action for Children: Wessex Fostering Services
The Roundhouse
Newgate Lane
Fareham
Hants
PO14 3DT
Tel: 01329 666930
Email: wessexcommunityprojects@actionforchildren.org.uk
Service Provision.

Fostering Wessex Project provides individual family-based placements in the community to support young people known to the judicial system and young people who experienced significant trauma and abuse. The service currently still provides short term prevention of offending foster placements operating on a block contract with Hampshire County Council. This contract is however due to cease operating as of the 1st of July 2017 given there is an increasing need for services to provide longer term foster placements to children and young people who experienced trauma and abuse and who struggle to form and sustain healthy attachments with others.

The project has also been recently successful in securing a place on the South Central Framework which consists of 14 local authorities, whose need is also to access therapeutic foster placements for children and young people up to 2 years with the view for these placements to become permanent when required. Through these foster placements, the children and foster carers receive bespoke individualised intervention, giving particular attention to the early trauma and childhood experiences of the child placed. These foster placements are also well planned, ensuring the lead therapeutic practitioner carefully considers each referral received, ensuring completion of a detailed matching process which is informed from a pre-placement meeting. Once the foster carer is identified and the placement commences, the care planning meeting and care provided to the child is provided in response to the child’s early experiences and to the trauma they were exposed to which is impacting on the child’s behaviour. will work through the presenting issues with the carers.

The Therapeutic lead practitioner will devise a Therapeutic Plan and coach the carers in appropriate safe techniques to promote positive emotional warmth/attachment, agree consistent/firm boundaries and routines which support them to provide high quality and stable placements. This approach will also be shared with the school, if appropriate, ensuring a holistic approach which further stabilises placements. The child is also given time to heal and recover from the trauma and the foster placement is well supported through the fostering social workers and clinical supervision provided through the psychotherapist. Art and play therapy will also be provided to the child when deemed necessary. The psychotherapist that will be commissioned for the service has extensive training and experience in working with children and families and is registered with the British Association of Psychotherapist (BACP).

Additionally, the project offers a range of fee-based placements for children and young people aged 0-18 on a short term or long term basis.

Size of service.

Fostering Wessex Project covers the Hampshire County area including Southampton, Portsmouth, and Isle of Wight, although we currently have no foster carers on the island. We also cover West Sussex having one fostering household in the area, and another in Dorset.

Number of foster carers.

As at the 1st of April 2017, Fostering Wessex project has 21 approved fostering households in total.

Geographically, the breakdown of foster carers by Local Authority is as follows:

- Hampshire: 13 Households
- Portsmouth: 5 Households
- Southampton: 1 Household
- Dorset: 1 Household
- West Sussex: 1 Household

Out of these 21 fostering households, 17 provide full time care and 4 provide respite care.

Foster carer recruitment.

We aim to recruit foster carers with demonstrable skills in caring for children with a high level of need, and offer a professional level of remuneration in recognition of the high level of commitment and qualities needed. The service aims to recruit carers from a wide range of backgrounds to ensure the greatest possible choice of appropriate placements and in an endeavour to reflect the demographics of the local population.

The Marketing and Recruitment Officer makes best use of local and internet based resources to promote the fostering service, dispel myths and recruit skilled and interested people. 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.
Preparation of foster carers.

Prospective foster carers who proceed with an application undertake the Skills to Foster Preparation course which is delivered in modules. The Skills to Foster Preparation course which is delivered in modules 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 voice of care experienced young people

Assessment and Approval.

Assessment of foster carers.

Foster carers are rigorously and comprehensively assessed using the BAAF/Coram competency based assessment format. The service has experienced social workers who undertake all assessments on prospective carers who are managed by an experienced Recruitment and Assessment manager. All applicants in assessment are also seen by the Manager for a Second Opinion Visit and where gaps or concerns are noted from this meeting, the manager ensures these areas are worked on before presenting the full assessment to the Fostering Panel. As per Fostering Regulations 2013, all of the assessments undertaken within the service follow the Stage 1 and Stage 2 processes.

Approval of foster carers.

The service has access to two fostering panels, one based in Fareham and one in London and both panels are arranged to take place at alternate months to ensure there is a Fostering Panel taking place in the region every calendar month. The Recruitment and Assessment manager also undertakes the role of Panel Advisor for both panels to ensure its functions continuously meet the stipulated legislation. Our Fostering Panels constitute in keeping with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and 2013, the representation includes; Action for Children social workers, managers and independent representatives including a foster carer, a young person with care experience, and local authority social workers. The fostering Panel is chaired independently. Prospective foster carers are invited to attend part of the panel meeting where their application is being considered.

Foster carers’ 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 social worker.

Support and Development of foster carers.

All approved foster carers within our service are supervised and visited at least monthly by their allocated social worker, and will receive additional support visits where required. The supervising social worker for the carers also maintain regular phone contact, at least once a week to check on the carers and the placement. All foster carers can also access an on call social worker during out of office hours and the service has a rota for accessing on call management support should this be required. Foster carers providing the therapeutic foster placements will also have access from the Psychotherapist during monthly clinical supervision along with support offered from the therapeutic lead practitioner and family worker when required.
All foster carers have access to monthly support group meetings. All foster carers have access to the Foster Carers’ electronic Handbook as well as on paper format. This provides them with guidance on key policies, procedures and expectations of their role, as well as signposting them to resources and information to support their learning and development.

The following is some of the feedback received from some of the foster carers about Fostering Wessex Project:

“This is an excellent service, with very good support. The support received from my social worker and on call workers, has made my job so much easier.”

“There is always someone at the end of the phone 24/7 and the advice given is always helpful. Not only that, the team also followed up after placement ended, to ask how things were and this is the ‘Rolls Royce’ of the service. I did not expect that but could not be happier about it.”

Matching and Making Placements.

When matching children to foster carers, the project will endeavour to match the needs of the child or young person to the skills, abilities and experiences of available foster carers. The family structure as well as the location of the fostering households is also considered when matching the young person with the available foster carers especially when the young person is still at compulsory education.

All referrals received for the therapeutic foster placements will be looked into and managed by the therapeutic lead practitioner who would also coordinate a pre-placement planning meeting to liaise with the professionals working with the child being referred to support family finding and subsequently the matching process.
Care for Young People.

Promoting positive behaviour and relationships.

Within the project, extensive training is provided on the therapeutic approach to foster carers, staff, and panel members. The lead therapeutic practitioner has access to the full dyadic training that is based on Dan Hughes PACE model. Foster carers also have access to a 4-day training on the Attachment Therapeutic Approach with the possibility to having access to an accredited course. Training on hypervigilance, secondary trauma and mindfulness is also available to carers and staff along with having access to behaviour support training.

Supervision sessions held with Foster Carers as well as discussions held at Support Group and Clinical meetings tend to be reflective to enable the carers to identify particular issues and to enable them to come up with solutions to the problem. Carers are supported to tailor their approaches in accordance to the child’s needs and development, providing them with a safe space and environment to grow and develop and to build and sustain healthy attachments with others and to engage in pro-social behaviour.

Safeguarding young people.

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 Disclosure and Barring Checks. Checks are also made with the local authorities and health authorities where applicants have resided. We undertake thorough reference visits and contact ex-partners to ensure that robust information is received on the applicants in assessment. Applicants will also be subject to a medical check, the outcome of which will inform the assessment process.

The service is committed to sound planning when making placements and will ensure that good levels of information are sought from referring local authorities and youth offending teams 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 where possible.

Every fostering family has a Safer Care plan which takes into account the specific needs of the fostered child and the fostering family. This plan along with the risk assessment and health and safety checks are updated regularly ensuring this is specific to the child.

Project Workers have some time alone with those children they are working with and through engagement of participation activities organised by the service, At the start of the foster placement, young people are given Action for Children Young People’s Guides which have been localised with the carers’ and teams’ information. We also seek feedback from children for the foster carer’s reviews, using different methods appropriate to a child’s age, understanding and level of engagement. We also undertake at least two unannounced visits to our carer households every year.

Children who have run away or are missing from care.

The service provides information for children on what to expect if they go missing from their foster care placement. Foster carers are provided with clear guidance on what to do in this eventuality and 24 hour support is available from the Wessex team. Each incident of a child going missing is risk-assessed to determine the level of risk and concern appropriate. Every absence is reported to the service, the placing authority, and to the police if warranted. The local Running Away and Missing from Care protocol for the relevant local authorities is known to staff and foster carers.
Promoting good health and wellbeing.

Children living with Action for Children carers are all registered with a local GP and dentist. Foster carers are provided with training on healthy eating, first aid and substance misuse.

The service builds good communication and relationships with adults who are key to the child’s welfare; parents, placing social workers, teachers and health workers so that they have a full picture of the child’s background, needs, preferences and priorities and are able to work together to support the young person.

Leisure activities.

Action for Children foster carers look for a young person’s unique talents and support him/her to explore and develop. Young people 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.

Foster carers will encourage and support all our fostered young people in becoming active and positive community citizens.

Promoting educational attainment.

Action for Children understands that many fostered young people face obstacles to doing well in school. Staff and carers work closely with schools, to help teachers understand how best to support our young people in the classroom and school environment. When required, carers will also act as advocates for the young to get the support they deserve and need.

Carers work patiently and creatively with young people to support them with their school work. Extracurricular activities are supported and creative ways are found to engage children who may have had bad experiences with school or who struggle to keep control of their feelings and behaviours in a classroom setting. Where resources allow, young people have access to private tutors if they are not in full time education or for any additional educational support. There is also an education policy in place organisationally.

Promoting independence and adult life skills.

We recognise that the reality for most young people leaving care is that they have to face the challenge of independent adult living, often before they are ready or fully equipped with the required skills. Action for Children foster carers and support workers work hard to prepare young people for this by teaching them ‘life skills’ from as early as possible, for example, helping with the shopping, cooking, saving regularly in a bank account throughout the time living with the foster carer, right through to learning about tenancies and benefits when they are approaching independence.

The range of needs Action for Children is able to meet.

We successfully have recruited and will continue to recruit and develop skilled and experienced foster carers, who are able to offer specialist placements in the community to children and young people as an alternative custody, or on a welfare basis. Typically these young people have complex backgrounds, display challenging behaviour, and have high level needs, including:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorders and attachment difficulties
- Self-harming
- Eating disorders and unhealthy lifestyles
- Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome as well as other diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabilities
- Engagement in sexually harmful behaviours
- At risk of sexual exploitation
- Engagement in offending behaviour
- Engagement in anti-social behaviour

Complaints.

The Service utilises Action for Children’s complaints procedure. The context for our complaints procedures is effective customer care, with service standards and service level agreements where appropriate, and with regular dialogue and review with customers of the service provided. 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 complainant’s 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.
Any complaints on the service can also be made directly to our Ofsted Inspector:

Ofsted  
National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD  
Tel: 03001231231  
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Children and young people can also contact the Children’s Commissioner for England if they wish to report any concerns or make complaints. The contact details for this are as follows:

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner  
Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street  
London, SW1P 3BT  
Tel: 020 7783 8330  
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Signed:

Christina Brandi  
Children’s Placement Manager and Registered Manager

Laurie Long  
Operational Director for Fostering Services