



# Action for Children Statement of Purpose

**Service:** Fostering Wessex

**Date:** 11/07/2025

**Registered:** Independent Fostering Agency

**Registration Body:** Ofsted

**Registration Number:** SC039572



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## 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 parents, prospective foster parents, 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 parents and prospective foster parents, 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 homes, which both meet and exceed the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and 2013.

### Our Vision

Every child and young person in the country has a safe and happy childhood and the foundations they need to thrive.

### Our Mission

We protect and support children and young people by:

- Providing practical and emotional care and support
- Ensuring their voices are heard
- Campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

### Our Values

We are:

Passionate about all children having a safe and happy childhood

Ambitious for children and young people

Collaborative – internally and externally with other organisations to get the best outcomes for children

Inclusive – we strive to ensure all children are included. We don't ask "if?" We ask "how?"

The Head of Fostering & Adoption (England & Scotland) is Colette Ferns

### Head Office

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

Tel: 01923 361 500

## Aims, objectives and outcomes

### Aims

We aim to ensure that children and young people are supported to thrive and develop a positive sense of identity, self-esteem and resilience through matching them with foster parents who have the skills and qualities to meet their needs and are aspirational on their behalf.

### Objectives and Outcomes

1. To deliver services that recognise and build on the strengths of children and young people from all cultures and religious backgrounds, ensuring the care provided meets their needs and enables them to achieve their potential.
2. To ensure that when children and young people are placed with foster parents, their identity including contact and ties with their birth family members are preserved and valued. whilst ensuring arrangements are in the child's best interest.
3. To deliver a regulatory compliant, responsive, supportive, professional 24 hour service for foster parents, looked after children and local authority partners.
4. To recruit, assess, support and train carers from diverse backgrounds, ensuring a choice of positive fostering family options for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families.
5. To support and prepare young people for the challenging transition into adulthood and independent living.
6. To ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse, harm and neglect.
7. To work effectively and collaboratively with other professionals and agencies to ensure comprehensive and co-ordinated services for children, young people and their families
8. To promote the health, personal care and developmental needs of all children and young people placed within a fostering family.
9. To promote educational attainment, progress and the school attendance of all children and young people placed within a fostering family.
10. To provide information about our services to all children, young people and families in ways that are appropriate to them.
11. To enable children and young people to feel engaged and to participate in shaping and developing our service.

12. To keep children and young people's wellbeing, happiness and quality of life at the centre of our practice and decision making.

13. To ensure we maintain a robust, experienced fostering Panel which operates within the legislative and regulatory parameters in relation to approving and reviewing carers, considering Standards of Care reports, etc.

14. To recruit, retain and develop committed, appropriately qualified and experienced staff and provide opportunities for ongoing training and development.

15. To create a sense of belonging within the foster family and safety and security for the child in their attachments to the foster family.

## Service Registration Details

### Name and address of the Registered Provider

Action for Children Fostering Wessex

The Roundhouse

Newgate Lane

Fareham

Hampshire

PO14 1JD

Tel: 01329 666930

E-mail: [ReferralsSouth@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:ReferralsSouth@actionforchildren.org.uk)

Out of Hours: 01642 226 372

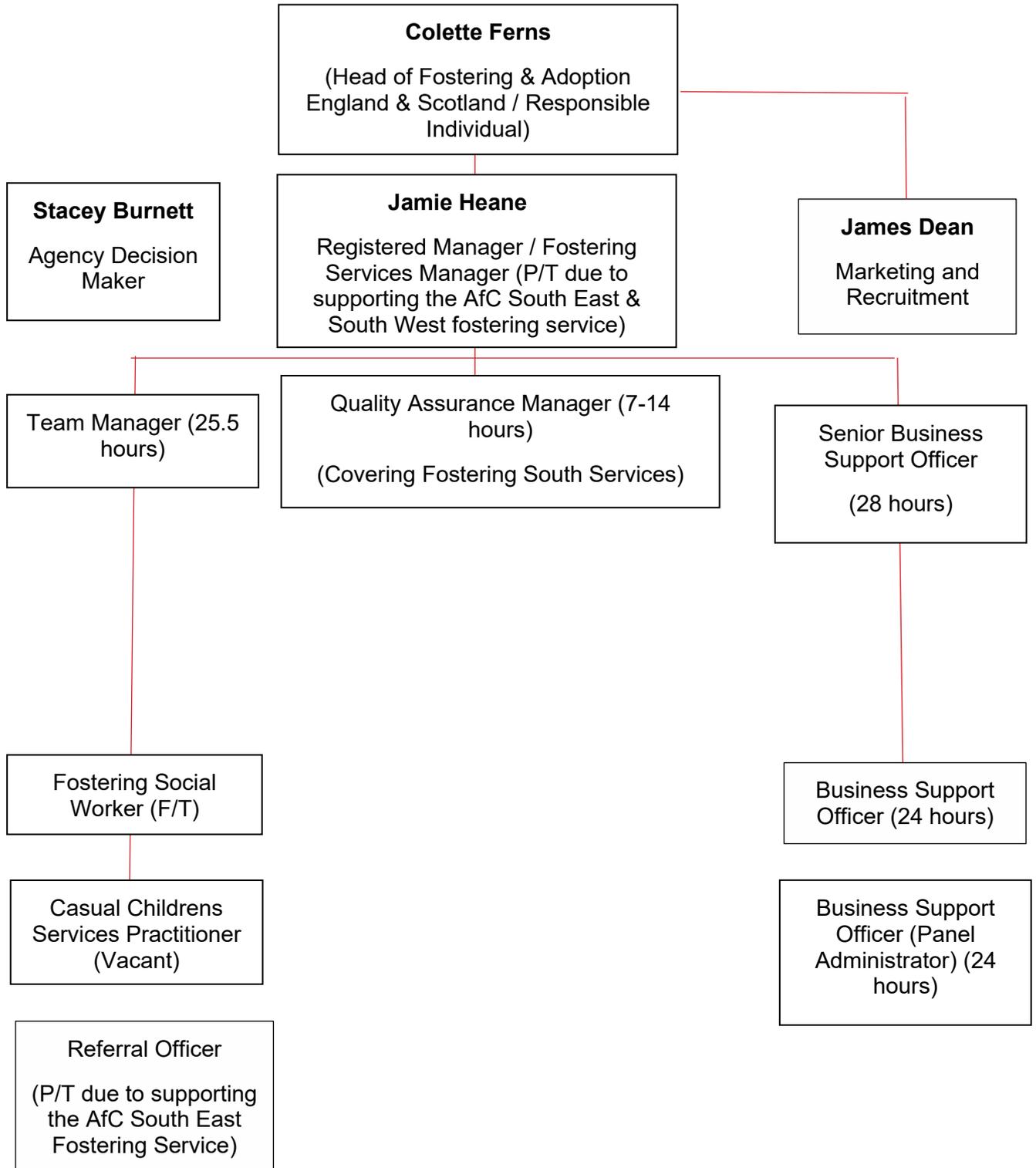
Responsible Individual: Colette Ferns, Head of Fostering & Adoption England & Scotland

Address: 3 the Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Registered Manager: Jamie Heane

The Roundhouse, Newgate Lane, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 1JD

## Service Staff Structure – Fostering Wessex



## Job roles and qualifications

### **Registered Manager / Fostering Service Manager**

Is a professionally qualified Social Worker registered with Social Work England. Fostering Service Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the fostering services to foster parents, children and young people.

The Fostering Service Manager is responsible for budgetary control and involved with the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation. The Fostering Service Manager is responsible for the management of Team Managers, ensuring all policies and procedures are up to date, completing audits of the service to ensure a high standard, and monitoring and advising on complaints and allegations ensuring appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place. Service Manager identifies training needs and liaises with external training agencies to ensure foster parents receive high quality training. The Fostering Service Manager also holds the role of Panel Advisor.

### **Team Manager**

Is a professionally qualified Social Worker registered with Social Work England. The Team Manager is responsible for the day to day running of the service including supervision and management of the Fostering Social Workers and Childrens Services Practitioner. Jointly responsible with the Fostering Service Manager for the practice management and ongoing development of the service and overseeing Schedule 6 and 7 recording and reporting, Notifications, etc. Works with Referral Officer, Service Manager, SBSO, etc. on financial matters e.g. forecasting, budget and so on. Also responsible for ensuring safe and well matched placing of children and young people with our fostering families. Maintains links with supporters groups in the local community.

### **Quality Assurance Manager**

Our Quality Assurance Manager covers services across the South of England including Fostering Wessex. She is a qualified Social Worker and is responsible for overseeing the documentation / reports presenting to our independent fostering panel. This provides independent oversight outside of the immediate team where the initial quality assurance role sits.

### **Marketing & Recruitment Manager**

We are supported by an M&R Manager as part of his nationwide role. M&R Manager explores and utilises numerous marketing tools and platforms to support our recruitment of

new foster parents and raise the profile of Action for Children. Also carries out analysis of effectiveness of these via statistical data and implementation of surveys, etc.

### **Fostering Social Worker**

Fostering Social Workers are qualified, experienced and registered with Social Work England.

Currently one full time Fostering Social Worker is supporting the Fostering Wessex team. Their primary role is supervising and supporting foster parents and monitoring the welfare and progress of children and young people living with them. They prepare reports for foster parent's annual reviews, run support groups and participate in delivering training. They also facilitate Young People's Groups. FSWs also support with recruitment of foster parents by carrying out initial visits to applicants and on occasions Form F assessments. Fostering Social Workers also provide our 24/7 out of hours support for foster parents and local authorities wishing to contact us.

### **Referral Officer**

Our Referral Officer deals with a high volume of referrals of children and young people needing a fostering family placement. RO liaises and share information with FSWs, TM and foster carers to identify if we have a suitably matched family. Also liaises with all parties to ensure that if possible introductions, placement planning and meetings are scheduled to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for the child or young person. Our RO supports with placement/income forecasting.

### **Senior Business Support Officer**

We have an SBSO who also works with another Action for Children fostering service. SBSO line manages and supervises BSO2s (administrative support staff). She supports with preparing budget reports, forecasting reports, billing and other finance tasks. SBSO also has oversight of Health and Safety monitoring and completion of Risk Assessments, etc.

### **Business Support Officer**

Our experienced BSOs carry out numerous and varied essential administrative tasks to support our team and the wider service. They are also most often the first point of contact for both internal and external communications. BSOs ensure that compliance checks for foster parents and staff are current and regularly updated. They also liaise with trainers and coordinate and book training venues. BSOs also carry out essential financial tasks, processing invoices, etc.

### **Panel Administrator**

Panel Administrator collates all panel documentation and disseminates to panel chair and members. She also takes and distributes panel minutes. PA also communicates and liaises with Panel Chair, Advisor and Panel Members to ensure we have the required quorum for Fostering Panel sittings. PA is responsible providing panel minutes and supporting documents to the Agency Decision Maker.

### **Summary of current staffing**

There are 6 qualified Social Workers (including management team) registered with Social Work England.

There is a range of experience in the team in fostering and social care including child care social work and safeguarding.

## **Services Provided**

Fostering Wessex provides family-based fostering homes in the community to support young people and children who have experienced significant trauma and abuse. The service supports children from the ages of 0 – 18 and provides a variety of foster homes including:

### **Planned Breaks**

We support foster carers who provide planned breaks either on a regular or impromptu basis in order to offer children the opportunity to enhance their life experience and to support parents, guardians or other foster carers in their continued care of the child.

These can be for children already cared for by other Action for Children foster carers or children cared for within other fostering agencies or Local Authorities.

### **Short-term**

Short-term foster care involves caring for children for any period from one night only to longer than a year, while long-term plans are being formulated. A child cared for within a short term fostering arrangement may return to the care of a parent/guardian or if this is assessed as not being in a child's best interests, they may move on to be cared for by a family member or friend or to long term fostering or adoption.

Alternatively, a short-term provision may become a long term foster home, if this is assessed as appropriate and agreed by all concerned, including the foster carer.

### **Long-term/permanency**

Foster homes are available with long-term foster carers who can care for individual children or sibling groups until they reach adulthood or possibly beyond, if a Staying Put Arrangements is agreed by all concerned.

For children to be matched long term with foster carers, this may also require consideration by the placing local authority's Fostering or Permanence Panel.

### **Solo Fostering**

Solo fostering arrangements are offered to children whose individual needs are such that they need to be cared for on their own. This might be because they have complex and/or challenging individual needs or if they may be a potential risk to other children.

### **Sibling Fostering**

Several of our foster carers can care for sibling groups to enable children to stay together throughout their childhood.

### **Staying Put Arrangements**

When a young person reaches eighteen years of age, whilst they no longer require foster care, they may wish to remain with their former foster carer under a Staying Put Arrangement. Such an arrangement is usually agreed directly with local authority concerned by the young person leading up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and their foster carer. Many young people are not ready to leave their foster home at eighteen years of age and a Staying Put arrangement can support their transition into adulthood.

### **Complex fostering**

We support foster carers who may have additional experience to support children with higher levels of complex needs who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation, trafficking and/or display sexualised behaviours, sexual abuse recovery and emotional health and wellbeing. All carers have access to our psychological support service with foster carers offering 'Complex' or 'Specialist' fostering arrangements having additional access to aid in reflection and support.

### **Emergency**

Whilst we always prefer to make planned placements for children and young people we acknowledge that there is sometimes a need for children or young people to be moved from a dangerous situation to a place of safety on an emergency basis. We have carers who can provide unplanned / emergency foster homes.

## **HOMES Framework**

Since April 2020, we have begun introducing elements of the HOMES framework which is supporting to further embed a therapeutic approach in all areas of our work. A psychology service, Changing Minds, who co-created the HOMES framework meet regularly with our team and foster carers to instil key concepts of the framework as outlined further below.



## Helping to Build and Maintain Connections

We recognise that our children and carers feel much more settled when they have a stable support network. We know that relationships and a sense of belonging are really important. That is why, we work on building safe trusting relationships between our foster carers, young people, staff, the community and other professionals. We know that our children and carers' placements progress more positively when they have these connections.

## Outcomes Focused and Evidence Based

The Homes Framework stresses the importance of capturing each young person's individual journey. This is why we work closely with our carers to set individual goals and track progress from the outset. We then use these personalised measures to identify when changes occur and put in any additional support that's needed. This also helps us to identify achievements and celebrate success.

We also ensure that our therapeutic approach is evidence based and current. We recognise, the importance of providing therapeutic care for our young people throughout their daily experiences and foster carers' are viewed as 'therapeutic parents' and those who are most able to affect change in the young person. This approach is in line with National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines (NICE, 2015) for supporting young people with attachment difficulties and aligned to the notion of 'redefining therapy' as outlined by Rogers et al, 20114.

The approach brings together an understanding of complex presentations and makes real and pragmatic links between theory and practice, pitching the interventions in a developmentally congruent way. This understanding, supported by psychologically informed formulation, then helps to inform and prioritise appropriate support plans. The service provided by Changing Minds draws upon a theoretical and evidence-based framework for work with young people with complex presentations that is, developmentally informed and grounded in attachment and trauma theory.

## **Making Sense Together**

What sets us most apart from other services is the way we work together with our carers, young people and other professionals. This first starts during the matching process when we provide detailed information and listen to everyone's views as part of a joint decision-making process. We aim to adopt a collaborative, curious approach when understanding our young people and their journey. We do this by developing a shared understanding (formulation) of a young person's strengths and needs.

## **Empowerment and 'Working with'**

We know how important it is for children and carers to have a voice in decisions from the very start of their fostering journey. This is often key to the success of placements, which is why our relationships are built on clear, honest and respectful communication. The views of children and carers contributes to the ongoing development of our service. Everyone is involved and has a part to play.

## **Safe, Stable Base**

Within our service, we recognise the importance of a nurturing, stable, safe environment for our young people, foster carers and staff team. We understand that stability and security within an attachment relationship is fundamental for a child and young person's emotional and social development (Hughes, Golding, & Hudson, 2015)<sup>1</sup> and we aim to welcome our young people into supportive, stable home environments. Providing a stable, safe base is also the crucial foundation needed to develop trusting and meaningful relationships in the future.

To enhance safety and consistency, all young people have;

- Individualised risk assessments
- Psychological formulations plans where possible
- Use of 'Matching Documents' and 'Matching Process' to understand the individualised need of each young person to ensure appropriate match to foster carer

- Involvement for foster carers in the development and roll out of the model, and ongoing training and support around this.

Support to Foster Carers includes:

- Monthly supervisions from an experienced Supervising Social Worker, clinical consultations, out of hours on call service, short breaks.
- Our Clinical Psychologist (from Changing Minds UK) provides consultancy for the team around matching young people and foster carers.
- One-page profiles are available for all our foster carers and staff to acknowledge
- Staff are offered a reflective space facilitated by the Clinical Psychologist to explore and consider the emotional impact of working with traumatised young people, and self-care strategies are encouraged.

## **Recruitment, approval, review and support for foster parents**

This section provides information on the procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective foster parents.

Action for Children's policies, procedures and standards for the recruitment and assessment of foster parents are in line with required regulations and standards for fostering services in Regulation 26 (a).

### **Enquiries**

On receiving an enquiry from a prospective foster parent, 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/Independent Social Worker to discuss in more detail the work of the Service and to answer any queries or concerns the enquirer may have. A decision will be reached as to whether the prospective foster parent wishes to and is suitable to proceed.

### **Assessment and Approval**

If a prospective foster parent 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 parents, working with different agencies, and child development. All applicants are required to attend.

As part of the process a 'Second Opinion' visit is also carried out by an Action for Children Manager (usually Team Manager). The purpose of this is to gain another perspective on the applicants from someone who is independent of the Form F assessing process.

The completed assessment report is presented to the Action for Children South Panel where items from the South East and South West services present.

The Panel will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster parents. These will be passed to a Senior Manager in Action for Children, who is nominated as the organisation's 'Agency Decision Maker', who has the final decision regarding approval on behalf of Action for Children.

Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the Agency Decision Maker's final decision.

### **Foster parent Reviews**

Reviews take place by Action for Children, in line with regulatory requirements of foster parent Regulation 28 (2).

A first review must take place within 12 months after approval and present to the fostering panel. Subsequent reviews take place every 12 months thereafter and can be heard internally with every third review presenting to panel unless additional concerns / household changes / changes of approval have occurred within the review requiring panel oversight. Action for Children must be satisfied that the foster parents continue to meet the required standards as set out in Regulation 28 (4).

Further to the above, 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 carer's adult child returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.

### **Foster parent Support and Supervision**

Action for Children values the work that foster parents do and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people in their care. The key to a successful foster home is the quality of support that foster parents receive. Action for Children offers the following support to all our carers:

- Supervision and support from a named qualified and experienced Social Worker. Fostering Social workers are pragmatic and will ensure any supervision meeting is in line with a foster parent/s and young persons availability in order to meet with children and young people, respond to situations and attend meetings etc.

- Access to a specialist fostering help and advice out of office hours support telephone service.
- 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 Buddy Support.
- Participation events available to children and young people placed, foster parents and their birth children, and Action for Children staff.
- A comprehensive post-approval training programme which is linked to (TSD) Training, Support and Development Standards.
- Where appropriate, and where in line with the child's care plan, we endeavour to provide short break care for the child and a short break for the main carer. Any short break will be carefully introduced where possible and introduced as a natural stay away for the child rather than a 'break' or 'respite'.
- Good quality liaison and working arrangements with local authorities including attendance at relevant meetings such as Education (PEP) and Looked After Child reviews.
- A level of financial support that values and recognises carer's skills, achievements and time including a foster care fee and fostering allowance.
- A buddy system for carers to share experiences and receive advice and support.
- Foster parents have access to 1-1 consultations with the commissioned if required
- The Childrens Services Practitioner works collaboratively with foster parent/s to support young people maintain stability along with tasks such as transitioning into independence.
- Free access to counselling and support from Health Assured.
- Free membership of Fostering Network. Fostering Network are able to offer independent advice and support to foster parents.
- A Foster parent's Ambassador scheme. Ambassadors are Action for Children foster parents who meet regularly with our senior managers and act as a conduit for sharing the views of their fellow carers and disseminating information from the organisation to foster parents.

## **Foster parent 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 parents.

Training is provided to help foster parents 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 parents are supported to complete Training Support and Development Standards for foster parents (TSDS) within 12 months of Approval.

Training is offered throughout a carer's career with Action for Children and incorporates a range of topics which evolve with changes in practice, legislation and needs, examples of which are:

- Child protection
- Recording & Report Writing
- Social Networking and Internet Safety
- First Aid
- Attachment
- Bereavement and loss
- Health and safety
- Caring For Traumatized Children
- Relationship and Sexual Health
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Administering and recording medication
- Behaviour Support Training
- Resilience Building
- Life Story Work
- Child Development
- Equality & Diversity
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Education and Health
- Allegations and Safer Caring Awareness
- Promoting Positive Identity and Positive Self-Esteem
- Safeguarding

## 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 and IROs at children's LAC reviews
- Feedback from local authority and other professionals prior to carer(s) reviews

## 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 parents/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 parents. Further information can be provided if such a situation should to arise.

## 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 Ofsted inspection of the Fostering Wessex on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the outcome of this was a rating of 'GOOD'.

Contact details; Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

Ofsted Information Helpline: 0300 123 1231 [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:whistleblowing@actionforchildren.org.uk)

Action for Children Senior management team:

Brigitte Gater, Interim Managing Director of Children Services:

[brigitte.gater@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:brigitte.gater@actionforchildren.org.uk)

Paul Carberry, Chief Executive – [Paul.carberry@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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/](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/)