



Statement of Purpose

NFA Midlands

URN: SC470279

March 2019

nfa national
fostering
agency



Contents

Introduction

Company Status

Vision, Mission and Values

Aims and Objectives

Commitment to Equality & Diversity

Management & Regional Team Staffing and Structure

Services Provided by the Agency

Matching

Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Carer Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

Annual Reviews

Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

Training and Development

Finance

Complaints

Accredited Standards

Professional Membership

Contact Details



Introduction

This Statement of Purpose for the National Fostering Agency has been developed and produced to meet the requirements of the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 4: fostering Services (2011)
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Assessment & Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations, Volume 4 Fostering Services (July 2013)
- Children and Families Act 2014

This Statement of Purpose is submitted to Ofsted and provided and made available to employees, carers, local authorities, children and young people in placement and to the general public via the NFA website www.nfa.co.uk, or in hard copy when requested. The statement of purpose is reviewed and agreed annually by the Registered Manager and Senior Management Team.

National Fostering Agency Midlands provides a service to children and young people and their foster carers across the West and East Midlands region.

Name and Address of Responsible Individual

Patricia Jarrett
Operations Director
National Fostering Agency
71 Cowley Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 2AE
E: info@nfa.co.uk

Name and Address of Registered Manager

Debra Blount
Registered Manager
National Fostering Agency
Unit 2450 Regents Court
Birmingham Business Park
Birmingham
B37 7YE
E: dblount@nfa.co.uk



Company Status

The National Fostering Agency was founded in 1995, and now provides fostering services across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Patricia Jarrett is the Responsible Individual for NFA Midlands.

National Fostering Agency Midlands is registered and inspected as an Independent Fostering Agency by Ofsted in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000. Ofsted URN: SC470279.

The National Fostering Agency group is a private limited company, registered in England. Company Number: 3127814

National Fostering Agency (Midlands) is part of the National Fostering Agency Group and reports to the board of directors and Senior Management Team:

- David Leatherbarrow – Group Chief Executive
- Steve Christie – Managing Director – Fostering Division
- Andrew Isaac – Corporate Affairs Director
- Suzanne Robson – Director of Human Resources.
- Liz Cowling – Director of Quality Assurance, Policy and Training
- Julie Bailey – Director of Practice Transformation and Compliance
- Patricia Jarrett – Director South
- John Keane – Director North

Senior Management Team (SMT) Objectives

The Senior Management Team are responsible for strategic planning for the company. This involves business planning which is in line with service user needs, company aims and objectives, financial commitments, organisational structure and policy and procedure which incorporates any new legislation, guidance and regulations. Our financial management ensures the very best value for our stakeholders.

They are also responsible for setting performance targets and subsequent monitoring, in addition to ensuring the legal compliance of the organisation.

The Registered Manager meets with Directors on a monthly basis to discuss the performance and quality of the agency, and review the business objectives in line with the agency's Business Plan.

Our Central Support Services include: Human Resources, Finance, Training, Quality Assurance, Compliance, Fostering Enquiry Centre and National Assessment Service.



Vision, Mission and Values

children are the heart of everything we do®



Our Vision

We will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable young people in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

Our Mission

Every day we improve the lives of thousands of young people, their families and communities through a relentless focus on caring and learning.

Our Values

Deliver Promises

- Be accountable.
- Take responsibility.
- Focus on outcomes.

Inclusive Spaces

- Create safe, nurturing environments.
- Care about what we do and each other.
- Value diversity.

Open & Honest

- Be fair and transparent.
- Do the right thing.
- Act respectfully.

Dream Big

- Believe you can.
- Make positive changes.
- Inspire and innovate.

OneTeam

Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.





Aims and Objectives

“Putting children at the heart of everything we do”

Aims and Objectives

The National Fostering Agency strives to deliver high standards of quality care for the children placed with our foster carers.

The agency is committed to the delivery of a service meeting the standards of care compatible with statutory and regulatory requirements.

The agency is inspected on a regular basis by Ofsted and copies of inspection reports are available from Ofsted. In addition a number of the local authorities that we work with carry out checks to ensure we are meeting contractual requirements.

Primary aims:

- To provide a high quality service for looked after children and young people of all ages whose needs have been assessed by the responsible Local Authority as being best met by placement with a foster carer
- To ensure children and young people are only placed with carers who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance
- To support, supervise and provide on-going training to carers so that they are able to meet the individual needs of the children and young people placed with them
- To continually develop and improve our services through evaluation and feedback on our work

Objectives:

- To ensure the provision of high quality care to children and young people in a safe family setting
- To meet the individual child's particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan
- To have 24 hour support for carers, children/young people

- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of a child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully a child's gender, sexuality and any disability they may have
- To develop the child's sense of identity and self-worth
- To promote the child's health and well being, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare
- To promote educational achievement and attainment
- To promote and support agreed contact with the child's family and friends, in accordance with the care plan
- To prepare children and young people for adult life
- To seek the views and opinions of children and promote participation alongside, their families and carers.
- To provide accessible training that enables carers to develop their skills and knowledge so as to better meet the needs of children placed with them
- To offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer's skills and experience.
- To regularly review the stability of placements minimising the potential for placement breakdown and poor outcomes for children
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes
- To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practice on a regular basis
- Use research to inform practice



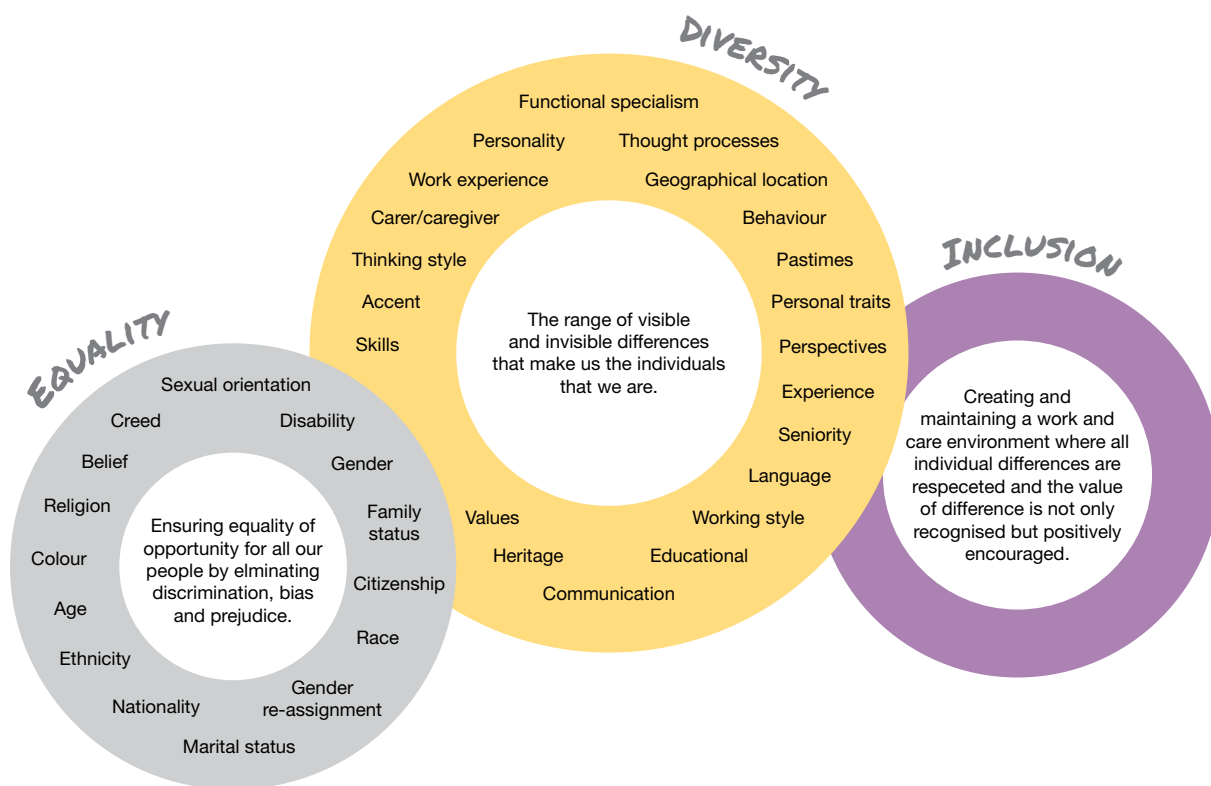
Commitment to Equality and Diversity

At the National Fostering Agency, we recognise the diverse society and communities in which we all live and work. We embrace diversity, respect difference and promote equality of opportunity. We aim to recruit staff and carers from all backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the Midlands region, and to meet the diverse needs of the children in our care.

We are aware however that discrimination, prejudice, unfairness and oppression exist in every aspect of daily living, including education, employment, health and social care. We are committed to enabling all children and young people, foster carers and employees to reach their full potential as individuals, unimpeded by discrimination, unfairness or oppressive behaviour within the organisation.

At the National Fostering Agency, we want all children and young people in our care, our foster carers and employees to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure our values are embedded in our day to day working practices with all our stakeholders and service users.

As an agency, we celebrate diversity and difference with our foster carers, children and young people through open events where we can all learn about each other's cultures, traditions, faiths and food....well, every event has got to have food!





Management and Regional Team Structure

Management Structure

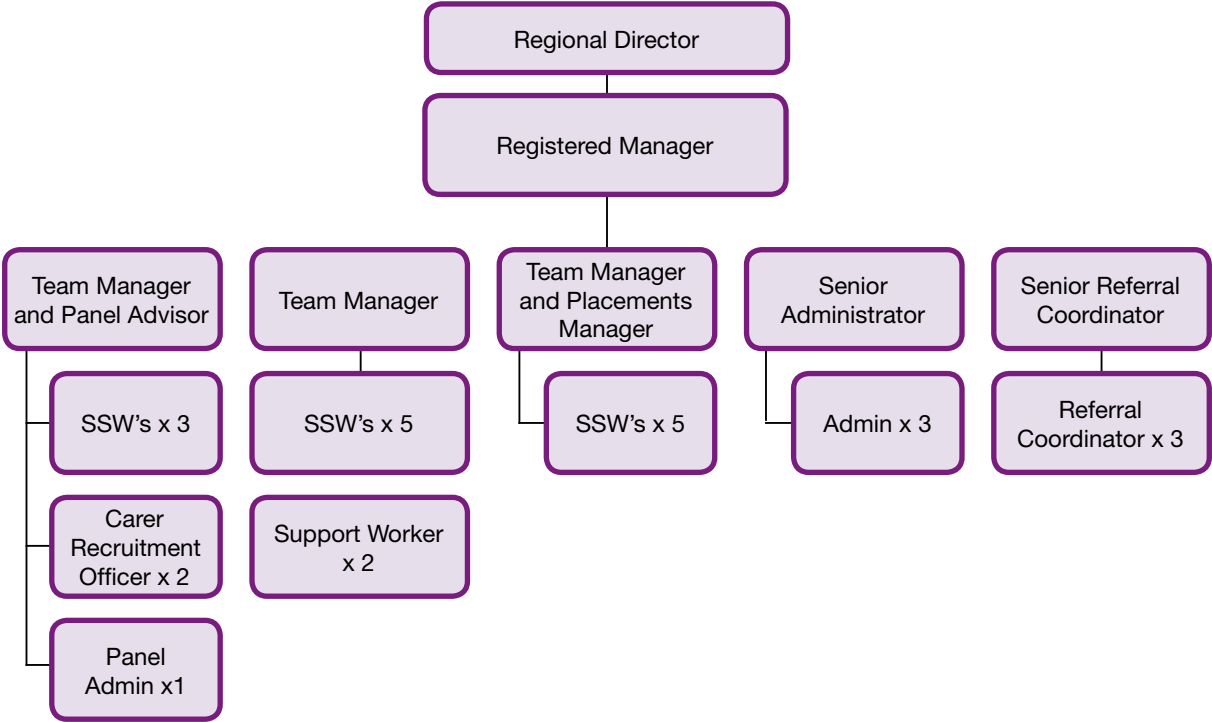
The NFA Midlands Senior Management Team have a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care, having worked at both practitioner and management levels. The Regional Director holds a management qualification, and the Registered Manager is currently studying the Diploma Level 5 in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services. Both are qualified social workers registered with the HCPC.

The Senior Management Team meets monthly and is responsible for all strategic and operational aspects of NFA Midlands. The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency and the delivery of services to children, young people and their carers.



Midlands Regional Team Structure

With the exception of the Regional Director, all members of the Midlands Management, Referrals and Admin Team are based at the regional office in Solihull. The team works closely together to ensure all enquiries to the agency are dealt with efficiently and effectively and the services delivered are high quality, responsive and meet the needs all stakeholders. The team meets together on a fortnightly basis to facilitate excellent communication, to review of agency progress and practice, and share ideas for service improvement and development.



The Staff Team

The registered office is based in Solihull, covering a wide geographical area across both West and East Midlands. The Supervising Social Workers, Support Workers and Carer Recruitment Officers can work remotely to ensure that we meet the needs of our carers, children and young people. All our Social Workers hold recognised professional social work qualifications and are registered with HCPC.

The Regional Director

The Regional Director has a key strategic role and is responsible for developing and managing all aspects of fostering resources and support functions in all registrations within their allocated region (Midlands). The Regional Director supervises the Registered Manager and supports them in delivering a high quality service demonstrated by the results of external inspections, stakeholder feedback (Local Authorities, carers, children and young people), internal audits and key performance indicators. The Regional Director ensures that operating objectives and standards of performance are understood and owned by the whole staff team, seeking to continuously improve performance across all areas of service delivery and delivering aspirational outcomes for children and young people.

The Registered Manager

The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency, including the supervision of Team Managers and the Senior Administrator and for the development of services to foster carers, children and young people. The Registered Manager is responsible for producing the agency's business plan, achieving business objectives and maintaining budgetary control of the agency. They are also involved with the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation and meet monthly with Senior Managers and Directors. The Registered Manager ensures that all practice is in accordance with agency policy and procedures, and contributes to the review and updating of these. They undertake ongoing audits and monitoring of the service to ensure the fostering service is of the highest standard. The Registered Manager monitors and advises on serious complaints and allegations and ensures the appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place.

The Team Managers

The agency has three team managers, each are responsible for the supervision and management of Supervising Social Workers, and each have a designated lead responsibility e.g. carer recruitment, referrals and placements, support services. The Team Manager leading on carer recruitment will work closely with the National Assessment Service and Assessment Manager designated to the region to ensure that recruitment and assessment of carers is robust and delivers carers that have the skills and experience for fostering. The Team Manager leading on referrals and placements oversees the Referral Co-ordinators and reviews referral trends and placements activity. The quality assurance function is an integral part of this role and they work closely with the NFA Group Quality Assurance and Compliance teams to ensure the regional team is compliant and delivering high quality services.

Supervising Social Workers (SSWs)

The SSWs have responsibility for the assessment, support, supervision and annual review of foster carers. In addition, they work in close partnership with the Looked After Children's Social Worker and will attend Looked After Reviews and Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings with the foster carer to ensure the very best outcomes are achieved for children placed with our carers. SSWs are responsible for monitoring the continuous professional development and training of foster carers. They ensure that all foster carers complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) and maintain an ongoing portfolio; working closely with the Learning and Development Team to facilitate this. In addition, SSWs co-ordinate and deliver support groups for foster carers and provide the frontline delivery of Out of Hours Services to carers.

Support Workers

Support Workers provide specific support services to both foster carers and children and young people, and have experience of working with children in a variety of settings. Input is time-limited and solution-focussed to enable those supported to achieve personal growth and development. Support services can include occasional transporting, supervising contact and undertaking direct work with children and young people. Direct work covers areas such as the development of independence skills, educational

support and preparing for employment and further education, self-protection and risk reduction skills, improving self-confidence and self-esteem. This list is not exhaustive and all packages of work are bespoke to the individual needs of the child or young person, enabling them to aspire and achieve their best potential. Support Workers also run groups and activities for both looked after children and children who foster which provides them with opportunities to socialise, share experiences and derive support from their own peer groups.

Carer Recruitment Officers (CROs)

The CRO is responsible for implementing the recruitment and marketing strategy, organising carer recruitment and retention activities/events and the initial screening of prospective foster carers. The CRO works closely with the regional management team, referral coordinators and panel administrator and more widely across the NFA group with the Head of Carer Recruitment to ensure the 'carer journey' is personal, timely and effective in recruiting and retaining foster carers.

Referral Coordinators

The Referral Coordinators manage all incoming referrals and develop key working relationships with Local Authority placements teams in order to identify potential placements for looked after children. They consult with foster carers and work closely with social workers and managers to ensure that good matching takes place by qualified social work staff; coordinating all arrangements through to placement. The Referral Coordinators have responsibility for collation and initial analysis of referral and placement data, and work closely with the Registered Manager to agree contracts and finance for placements.

Administrators

The administration team consists of Senior Administrator, who has supervisory responsibility for the Team Administrators. The administration team works closely with all foster carers and staff to ensure all administrative functions are managed efficiently handling all incoming calls and correspondence. They have responsibility for maintaining the relevant checks for foster carers, adult household members and their support network e.g. DBS, Medicals, LA checks. They also have responsibility for the collation and distribution of all Annual Review and Fostering Panel paperwork,

and for room bookings, food and refreshments. The team collates data for reporting on auditing and compliance, and for the completion of LA data returns.

Therapeutic Support Services

Therapeutic support services to the agency, carers and children can be delivered on an individual basis according to need and is provided by suitably qualified, experienced and accredited professionals commissioned to undertake the work.

The agency is fully supported by the Human Resources Department to ensure that safer recruitment processes are strictly adhered to, and all staff, independent roles and volunteers have the relevant qualifications and background checks prior to commencement in employment, in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and National Minimum Standards 2011.

All staff receive regular support and supervision appropriate to their role, and an annual appraisal of performance and objectives. In addition, Supervising Social Workers have group practice workshops for further critical reflection, which can be case specific, or focussed on complex practice issues and serious case reviews. Supervision and appraisals review staff professional development, ensuring that training and development needs specific to their area of responsibility are promoted. All staff undertake mandatory training in Equality and Diversity, GDPR, Child Protection Awareness and 'Think, Spot and Speak Out'.



Services Provided by the Agency

The National Fostering Agency works closely with a number of Local Authorities to understand their specific needs relating to foster placements in particular areas. As an agency we then look to recruit foster carers from a range of backgrounds who are able to provide high quality foster placements for children in the care of Local Authorities. The types of placement provided are:

Emergency

Many of our carers can provide unplanned emergency placements for individual children or sibling groups. Referrals can be made both within office hours, and through our Out of Hours service.

Respite/Short Breaks

We have a number of carers who provide respite placements either on a regular basis or one off holiday breaks.

Short term

Short term placements vary in duration but can be up to two years as they are often linked to further assessments of the child, family or connected persons, and involve court processes. Long term plans are often formulated whilst the child remains in short term placements.

Bridging

We are able to provide placements with foster carers who are experienced in bridging children to adoption, permanence or independence. Bridging placements form part of the long term plan for the child and usually last up to 2 years.

Long Term/Permanence

Placements are available with long term foster carers who can take individual children or sibling groups. Long term placements are matched in accordance with the placing authority procedures.

Parent and Child

We are able to provide foster care placements where young parents receive support and guidance to help develop parenting skills. Foster carers can also assist Local Authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

Solo Placements

If the placing authority requires the child/young person to be the only placement, this would need to be clearly identified and discussed at the referral stage to enable appropriate matching with appropriate vacant carers.

Sibling Placements

Many of our foster carers have the skill, experience and accommodation to care for large sibling groups, enabling children to stay together. This is always undertaken in line with matching considerations and the care plan for sibling groups.

Unaccompanied Children and Young People

Several of our foster carers have developed the skills and experience for providing placements to children and young people who are unaccompanied from overseas, enabling these children to settle and engage in education and positive family experiences.

Specialist Fostering

Provides placements to children who have complex needs relating to disability, health needs or behaviours that adults can find challenging. These Placements usually include enhanced packages of support or additionally purchased services.

Staying Put

Refers to the arrangements whereby Young People aged 18 and older that were previously looked after remain living with their former foster carers.



Matching

Matching children and young people to the right approved fostering household is a carefully considered process; getting it right is critical and will advance the progress, experience and outcomes for children and increase placement stability and retention, and provide children, young people and their carers with positive fostering experiences.

At the National Fostering Agency, we recognise that children and young people are individuals, with a diverse range of needs and talents, requiring fostering placements that are equally unique. Our carers have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience, and our task is to carefully match children and young people, with those carers who have the right skill set and approach to meet their individual needs.

Our dedicated Referral Coordinators are on hand to assist Local Authorities in finding the right match for children and young people. They work closely with the Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers and Local Authorities to ensure the best possible matches are made.

The matching process carefully considers the child's needs in relation to the following key areas:

- Safeguarding
- Personal history
- Identity/ethnicity/culture/religion
- Health, wellbeing and disability
- Education/Training/Employment
- Contact
- Behaviours and risk management
- Interests and aspirations
- Overall objectives/outcomes for the placement

The matching process will also consider the following in relation to the carers:

- Their terms of approval
- Their availability
- Their knowledge, experience and skills
- Their location and distance to school, friends, contact and LA
- Their ability to transport
- Their experience of facilitating and/or supervising contact
- Any other looked after children in placement
- Own children and other household members

The National Fostering Agency will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child/young person cannot reasonably be provided by the proposed foster carers.

If a child is placed with carers from a different ethnicity or culture to their own, there will always be an emphasis on the preservation of the child's identity and heritage through practical and emotional support.

If a child is identified with specific health needs, consideration will be given as to whether specialist health resources are available within reasonable travelling distance of the foster home. The agency will source additional specialist training, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure the carer is fully competent in meeting any specific health needs.

Foster carers are provided with all information made available to the agency in order for them to make fully informed decisions about whether they can meet the individual child's needs and care plan. Carers are fully involved in the matching process throughout and will ultimately make the final decision as to whether or not they can offer the child or young person a placement in their home.

The BAAF Form F Assessment and Carer Profile is made available to the Local Authority for any placement offers made, enabling them to have detailed information on the proposed carer and fostering household.

The National Fostering Agency also offers an emergency placement service outside normal working hours. Referrals in these instances will be managed by one of the regional Supervising Social Workers who will review the needs and circumstances of the child referred and match these to carers approved for emergency foster placements. The Supervising Social Workers have full access to carer information outside working hours, so quality matching is maintained in the same way as it is within office hours.

Ofsted (2017) stated **“the agency is successful in providing stable placements for many children who need them. This includes keeping brothers and sisters together, children and young people who have complex needs and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children”**.



Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

Children & Young People's Rights

The National Fostering Agency supports UNICEF's mission statement to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. In doing so, the agency, its staff and foster carers will uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Participation and Consultation

The National Fostering Agency is committed to the inclusion of all stakeholders in the review and development of its services. The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are vital to ensuring the services meet their needs and remain relevant in a changing environment. Consultation takes various forms either through questionnaires, online surveys, consultation events, activities and feedback forms for carer annual reviews and LAC reviews. All children and young people receive a copy of their own magazine 'Kidslines' or 'Teenlines' filled with interesting news and articles from, and relevant to, children and young people.

Support for Children in our Care

National Fostering Agency Midlands provides care for children and young people. The children placed come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and it is imperative that they receive the highest standards of care to enable them to aspire and achieve in our care. To this end, the National Fostering Agency has established clear guidance in the Foster Carers Manual which outlines the standards expected from all foster carers and staff.

In addition, when the Local Authority and agency have agreed that an identified foster carer can meet the needs of a child; a placement contract is made agreeing the duration and objectives of the placement. The Local Authority Social Worker, the child and their parents (if considered appropriate) are invited to visit the foster carer for a pre-placement meeting. This gives

an opportunity to meet and create a Foster Placement Agreement/Care Plan. It is expected that the Child's Social Worker will bring documentation to the meeting.

All children and young people placed will receive a copy of the Children's Guide at the time of placement, and will be supported to understand the contents of this via their foster carer, or via a 1:1 session with the agency support worker. Supervising Social Workers will see each child placed on a regular basis to ascertain their views about their care and placement.

Services available for children include:

- Support to find a hobby, sport, interest
- Support with development of independence skills
- Bespoke individual 1:1 work to address an assessed need
- Group work to address thematic issues e.g. use of social media
- Social events and activities for both children looked after and those who foster e.g. arts and craft activities, cookery competitions, festival celebrations.
- Life story or permanence preparation
- Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people e.g. Coram Children's Legal Centre.

Physical Environment

National Fostering Agency pride themselves on the standard of their foster homes providing safe, stimulating, caring environments, where there is a focus on health, education, protection, continuity, diet and stimulation.

All children have their own bedroom unless the Placing Authority has given permission for them to share (in the case of siblings or holiday accommodation). Children are encouraged to individualise their rooms. It is a requirement that all children are provided with a quiet area for study within the foster home, and have access to a computer and the internet (where appropriate). All foster homes are assessed for a healthy and safe environment on an annual basis, which is routinely monitored through monthly supervisory visits. Play areas are safe and enclosed and all play equipment is checked to ensure it is in good working order.

Boundary Setting

Each foster home has their own Safe Caring Policy which highlights boundaries within each home. Risk assessments and strategies relating to each child's circumstances and behaviour are agreed in the child's Placement Agreement/care plan which is completed at the commencement of the placement.

Policies on sanctions control, restraint and complaints procedures are available to children, parents and professionals. These policies are imperative to ensure that behaviours are responded to in a consistent and fair manner. Any form of corporal punishment is forbidden. Foster carers strive to offer a consistent environment and the role models that children require.

Healthy Care

National Fostering Agency, in partnership with the foster carer, Social Worker and Health Authority, establish the individual health needs of each child in our care. If a child has been placed locally they will continue using their own health resources, if this is not possible children will be:

- Registered with a GP
- Registered with a dentist
- Registered with an optician

National Fostering Agency has established good working relationships with health care professionals. We are able to access expert advice to ensure children's individual health needs are met. We have a stringent policy on keeping, administering and recording of medication which each foster carer is expected to adhere to; this is routinely checked by Supervising Social Workers. Foster carers encourage children to eat a varied diet. Special dietary requirements are written into the child's Placement agreement/Care Plan. Foster carers encourage children to participate in regular exercise to ensure the development of good physical, emotional and psychological health. Children are encouraged to attend out of school activities to enable them to widen their social circle and develop any talents and skills they may have.

Our foster carers will:

- Encourage children to eat a varied diet – Any special dietary requirements are written into the Child's Placement Agreement/Care Plan.
- Encourage and enable children to participate in regular exercise to ensure good physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing.
- Ensure that children placed receive all required childhood immunisations
- Ensure that young people have access to sexual health information and advice to make informed decisions and choices
- Take the time to listen to young people giving them an outlet to share emotions, thoughts and feelings to promote positive emotional wellbeing.

Therapeutic Support Services

We believe that children and young people have a right to access therapeutic provision from Local Health Authorities. We have developed good working relationships with health colleagues in each local area and will access local provision wherever possible. If children cannot access local provision due to the timescales involved, or the complexity of the situation; the agency can commission the services of suitably qualified, experienced and accredited professionals to undertake the work e.g. play therapists, child psychologists, art therapists.

Education

The National Fostering Agency believes that all children and young people have the fundamental right to experience an appropriate education which enables them to meet their potential. Our aim is to ensure that every child placed has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which is monitored and reviewed at regular intervals by the child's school, social worker and carer. Carers should be fully included in this review process. In addition, the agency will work with schools and placing authorities to ensure that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have been appropriately assessed to determine the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Educational goals are important to build a firm foundation of academic and social learning to enable children to aspire and achieve their full academic potential, including formal qualifications. Where possible, children are enrolled at local schools and have the opportunity to form friendships and participate in extra-curricular activities in the local community. The agency expects the Local Authority to provide teaching hours/ alternative educational provision for those children without a school placement, or can source bespoke educational packages at additional costs.

Contact with Friends and Relatives

National Fostering Agency ensures that each child in our care is encouraged to maintain contact with those most important to them. We can provide facilities, by arrangement, to ensure a child is able to meet with their family, friends or professionals involved with them, in privacy. Contact arrangements form part of the child's overall Placement Agreement/Care Plan. We would expect to be informed of any changes by the child's Local Authority. Transport to and from contact locally is the responsibility of the foster carer, but needs to be negotiated to ensure each child's needs can be met by the foster carer (particularly if they have other children in placement).

Foster carers encourage children to make positive lasting friendships and will facilitate friends for tea visits and outings when appropriate. Foster carers contribute to informal contact arrangements with siblings looked after by other foster carers.

In accordance with applicable legislation, standards, regulations and guidance, National Fostering Agency looks to work with the child or young person's parent(s) and Significant others. We understand the importance of meaningful involvement and the significant impact that this can have on the child or young person's life. Our Social workers and foster carers are experienced in working with birth families in a way that positively recognises their involvement.

Unauthorised Absence and Missing

All foster carers have access to the agency policy on children who go missing. If there are issues of risk, vulnerability or child sexual exploitation, then a strategy will be discussed and agreed with the Child's Social Worker, young person and foster carer. This is to ensure appropriate safeguards and supervision are in place, to further improve risk awareness and facilitate risk reduction. The agency will request the Local Authority conducts Return Home Interviews following all missing episodes, but if this is not carried out, the agency SSW or support worker will visit to further explore the reasons for going missing and provide appropriate support.

Safeguarding Procedures

The National Fostering Agency has safeguarding procedures in place which are in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children to safeguard and protect the welfare of all children. All staff and foster carers are required to fully adhere to these procedures. Where there is a need to review any safeguarding practices to ensure safe care is provided, this will be done in consultation with the Children's Social Worker, Carer and young person (where possible).



Carer Recruitment, Assessment & Approval

Recruitment

The National Fostering Agency is committed to recruiting a diverse range of foster carers who can meet and match the needs of our children and young people. The agency recruits individuals and families from different ethnic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds and from all parts of the Midlands community who can bring a variety of skill, knowledge and experiences to the fostering task.

Application Process

The National Fostering Agency website provides prospective carers with information, case examples and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help them make informed choices about fostering with this agency. Enquiries can be made online or by telephone, and a Pre Initial Visit Screening Call will be undertaken by a Carer Recruitment Officer within 2 days of enquiry and this information will enable a decision to be made about whether or not to proceed with the enquiry and send out an Enquiry Pack.

All applicants must:

- Have a spare room
- Be able to provide transport for children e.g. school, contact
- Be able to keep detailed records relating to children placed
- Be able to attend all relevant meetings
- Actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- Have some IT skills

Initial Visits

Following the Initial Enquiry Screening Call, a Manager will allocate the Initial Visit (IV) to a Carer Recruitment Officer or Supervising Social Worker, and this will take place at the prospective applicant's home. This provides an opportunity for the agency to share more detailed information with prospective carers around the realities of fostering, to answer any of their questions, and to view and assess the accommodation.

The discussion will include exploration of skills, knowledge and motivation to foster, and any practical requirements. If appropriate, an Application Form will be left, or a link provided to the online Application Form.

All IV reports are reviewed by a Manager, and outcomes shared with the prospective applicant.

Transferring Carers

The National Fostering Agency recognises that carers have choices and that in some instances decisions are made to move between approving agencies. In these circumstances the Fostering Network Protocols are followed, and the agency work closely with responsible Local Authorities to ensure that the care experiences of any children in placement are not detrimentally affected by the transfer.

Assessment Process

All fostering assessments are based on the BAAF Form F, completed by qualified, registered social workers, and undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, guidance and policy. The 2 stage assessment process (Stage 1 & 2) is expected to take a maximum of 4 months.

The assessment includes completion of a number of relevant statutory checks and references including: DBS, Local Authority Checks, Medical, Ex-Partner References, Personal References (x3), Employer References, Health & Safety checks and Letting Agent consent etc. The assessor will also agree a schedule of visits to complete the assessment in a timely, focussed manner.

The Applicants will be invited to undertake Skills to Foster Training, delivered by in-house trainers, and this feedback will form part of the assessment process.

The assessment is comprehensive and evidence-based, producing a report that covers individual profiles, past and present relationships/partnerships, support networks, interviews with children and adult members of the household, lifestyle, parenting capacity and experience, valuing diversity. The report will make recommendations on the terms of approval e.g. number of children, age range, placement types, and will be presented to the agency Fostering Panel. The applicants will also be required to complete a Safe Care Policy, Fire Evacuation Plan and Carer Profile.

Following completion of the assessment, the applicants are invited to attend the fostering panel

with their assessor, whereby the panel will make a recommendation on approval. The fostering panel membership is made up of both agency staff and independent members, and their experience is derived from a variety of backgrounds including health, education, and social care and fostering and includes members who have experienced the care system. The function of the panel is to provide an independent quality assurance role, to consider the approval of applicants and the continuation of approval of existing carers.

Following panel presentation, the applicants will be notified immediately of the panel's recommendation in respect of their application. However the final decision as to the applicant's approval will be made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

If applicants are unhappy with the ADM decision, they have a right of appeal, which can be made direct to the agency, or the Independent Review Mechanism within 28 days.

If, at any time during the assessment, the assessor feels the application falls short of the standards required, this will be discussed with the Team Manager immediately. Any areas of shortfall must be fully explored and where training or support will not bring the applicant up to acceptable standards, the assessment must cease. The assessor will inform applicants of this decision and the reasons within 48 hours and present a brief report for consideration by the fostering panel.

Post Approval

The applicants become known as newly approved carers and will receive written confirmation of their approval. In addition, they will receive a Foster Carer Agreement detailing their responsibilities, and the agency's responsibilities, which must be signed.

The agency will allocate a dedicated Supervising Social Worker to each fostering household, who will have responsibility for new carer induction and training plan, and for enabling the carers with completion of the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) which must be completed within the first 12 months post approval.



Annual Reviews

Each fostering household will have an annual foster carer review (AFCR), unless there are significant changes to their circumstances in which case, an earlier review will be conducted. These circumstances include:

- After the final strategy meeting of a Section 47 investigation involving a carer(s)
- Where serious allegations have been made regarding a carer(s) child care practice and no Section 47 investigation is pursued
- Where there has been a relationship breakdown in the approved carers' relationship resulting in one carer moving out of the household. In this instance, both carers will be subject to review except where one or both carers have given notice of an intention to resign
- Where a carer has started living with a new partner
- Where there have been significant changes to the carers' lifestyle
- Where a carer has been diagnosed with a serious illness
- Where there has been the death of a carer
- Where a carer is not working in partnership with the agency, including a lack of engagement and attendance with training and continued professional development.

The Supervising Social Worker is required to prepare a detailed report for the AFCR, in consultation with the foster carers. The report will seek and take into account feedback from the child/young person, their Social Worker, school, other professionals involved in the child's care, including birth family (if appropriate). In addition, it should include the views of the carer's own children too, in particular those residing in the fostering household. The report should cover how the carers' have met and progressed the outcomes for children, and provide a clear picture of how the carer works with children and young people in their care.

The AFCR provides an opportunity for both the agency and foster carer to reflect on the past year, and plan for the year ahead; this includes a full review of the individual carer's training and development needs, detailing any actions for the year ahead. The report makes a clear recommendation regarding continued approval, or any changes to the terms of approval, including the rationale and evidence to support those changes.

Following approval, the carers' first review report and every third annual review will be presented back to the Fostering Panel for their recommendations. All review recommendations are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for decisions, and carers notified, in writing, of those decisions.



Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

Each foster carer has a named Supervising Social Worker whose role is to provide them with advice and guidance in relation to a child's care plan and placement plan.

National Fostering Agency Supervising Social Workers have four principal functions:

- To work with foster carers in developing and supervising their skills as well as offering regular structured support
- To represent National Fostering Agency in our relationship with Placing Authorities and to seek to ensure that care plans are made and followed for children in placement
- To review foster carer's skills and achievements on an annual basis
- To promote and participate in training aimed at foster carers, their birth children and children in placement

Supervising Carers

The relationship between Supervising Social Workers and foster carers should be professional and aimed at achieving the best interests of the children in placement. Problems and concerns should be openly addressed with a view to reaching a satisfactory resolution in accordance with fostering regulations and agency policies. It is important that Supervising Social Workers see the children frequently.

Supervisory Visits

National Fostering Agency foster carers will have a supervision visit at least monthly by a qualified social worker whose role is to support the foster carers and monitor the standard of care received by a child. The focus of the visit is twofold. The first part of the visit should concentrate on the foster carer's professional development, family dynamics, safe caring and the tasks required of them by the Agency. The second part of the visit should concentrate on the child's plans, achievements and development. Supervising Social Workers are required to carry out at least two unannounced visits each year and a Health and Safety Check List to be completed annually, prior to review.

Support

Support is a combination of listening, understanding and helping to find practical solutions/ways of coping with challenges. A successful Supervising Social Worker/foster carer relationship allows foster carers to talk openly and honestly to you about their own family problems as well as the difficulties/ challenges they are having in caring for children they look after. The foster carer is supported in achieving the care plan for the children as part of a team.

The Supervising Social Workers work on a rota basis to provide a local Out of Hours support to foster carers on a 24/7 basis. A Duty Manager also provides back up to the Out of Hours service ensuring both staff and carers can access all the support and information they need.

The agency Support Worker may also provide additional support to carers with carer skill development, strategies for behaviour management and risk reduction and transporting (where necessary and appropriate). They can also undertake direct support work with children who foster, to increase their understanding and awareness and meet their needs too.

Additional support services to assist in meeting the needs of children placed may include:

- Respite (of varying duration)
- Day Care
- Structured activities
- Contact between children, their family and friends.

Developing Skills

Developing skills means encouraging foster carers to attend training, helping them to put that training into practice, using resource material such as literature, guidance laid down in the Fostering Manual, and other available resources.

Information and Record Keeping

Foster carers have access to a comprehensive fostering manual, which is also available within the foster carers secure area of our website. The manual contains information and procedures on all aspects of the fostering task and is updated regularly to ensure it remains a relevant reference document. Foster carers are expected to maintain records of events and information pertaining to the child or young person in placement. Foster carers complete a monthly report detailing the progress made by the child or young person in achieving 5 key Every Child Matters outcomes. This report is also shared with the Local Authority Social Worker.

Events

At the National Fostering Agency we hold a wide variety of events to support carers in building relationships with other carers and staff, to acknowledge the achievements of carers, and to participate in charitable fundraising activities e.g. Macmillan. Our events include informal carer coffee mornings and lunches, support groups, award celebration events, and an 'End of Year' evening. The diversity of events allows everyone the opportunity to contribute and participate, enhancing relationships with each other, and the agency.

Support Groups

The National Fostering Agency runs Carer Support Groups in several locations throughout the Midlands region to make them as accessible as possible to all foster carers. The groups are facilitated by Supervising Social Workers and provide a great opportunity for information sharing, exploring thematic issues or learning from research, discussing changes in practice, policy and legislation, and generally providing an opportunity for foster carers to interact in a social environment with other foster carers and derive peer support.

Newsletters

The National Fostering Agency produces a national magazine for all foster carers to share information on agency developments, events, activities, to share best practice and to celebrate team and individual achievements and successes. In addition, the region also produces a quarterly regional newsletter, Regional Lines, to keep carers informed of regional team news, developments and achievements.

The Fostering Network

Once approved, the agency provides all foster carers with The Fostering Network membership. The Fostering Network is able to provide carers and their families with advice and guidance, including financial and legal advice. Membership for foster carers includes:

- Monthly eNewsletters of the latest news and events in fostering.
- Digital resources.
- Invitations to participate in national foster carer surveys to raise the profile of fostering and influence change.
- Access to specialist home insurance for foster carers through Towergate, as well as free expert mortgage advice and discounted arrangement fees with The Mortgage Brain.
- 50% off days out at Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Blackpool Tower and Sea Life Centres, and 10% off holidays and short breaks with Haven, Hoseasons and cottages.com
- A dedicated member helpline staffed by experts who can provide advice and guidance on all fostering practice topics
- Legal Advice Service

Insurance

The National Fostering Agency has a comprehensive insurance package in place which fully covers all agency activities. This cover includes Personal and Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity and satisfies the insurance requirements for all fostering framework contracts awarded to the agency.



Training and Development

The National Fostering Agency is committed to ensuring that all foster carers are highly skilled, knowledgeable and equipped to give children and young people placed with this agency, a positive fostering experience. The statutory framework for fostering informs the comprehensive training programme delivered to our foster carers to ensure their continual provision of high quality care.

The agency has a dedicated Learning and Development Team; the Head of Carer Training and the Training Manager (Midlands) are both based in the regional office at Solihull, and have dedicated, in-house trainers delivering the training programme at 12 venues throughout the Midlands region to ensure carers can easily access training. The training equips the foster carers' to work with complex children and young people to ensure their quality of life is improved. The foster carers are trained to develop an understanding and knowledge of the multi-racial and disadvantaged groups in our communities.

The training programme is updated and reviewed annually to ensure the courses delivered are compliant with the latest guidance and legislation. In addition, the agency has introduced the Carer Academy, an 8 week reflective training course to enhance the skills of experienced foster carers.

In response to feedback and course evaluations, our training programme comprises of face to face training, seminar workshops, webinars and online/e-learning training modules. This ensures that all foster carers have a wide range of opportunities available to suit their preferred learning style and availability.

Training audit data is regularly reviewed to assess regional compliance, and identify any gaps. Foster carers have a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed as part of ongoing supervision and annual appraisal.

Mandatory Courses

As part of ongoing Learning and Development, there are a number of courses carers must complete:

- Skills to Foster (pre-approval)
- Online Child Protection & Safeguarding (pre-approval)

- Online Data Protection E-Learning x 2
- Training, Support & Development Standards (within 12 months of approval)
- Induction Courses x 5 (with 2 years of approval)
- First Aid training

Induction Courses:

- Record Keeping for Foster Carers
- Safer Caring/Allegations
- Understanding Behaviours Part 1
- Attachment & Bonding in Abused and Neglected Children
- Child Protection and Safeguarding

Continued Professional Development Courses (CPDC):

- Children & Domestic Violence
- Bullying
- Therapeutic Needs of Looked After Children
- Caring for Children who have been Sexually Abused – Part 1 & 2
- Promoting Positive Identity and Self Esteem
- Contact with Birth Families
- Caring for Asylum Seeking & Refugee Children
- Parent and Child Part 1 & 2
- Understanding Behaviours Part 2
- Promoting Resilience
- Internet Safety
- Sexuality, Sexual Health & Sexual Development
- CBT – Introduction to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Techniques
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Understanding the needs of Children and Young People affected by Parental Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Transitions – Moving In, Moving On
- Managing your own stress
- Men Who Foster
- Children and Young People who Self Harm
- Managing the Transition to Permanence
- Supporting Children and Young People with Autism and Asperger's
- Law and the Care System

- Future of Adoption and how this affects Children, Young People and Foster Carers
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Education & Foster Carers
- Child Development
- Diagnosed Attachment Disorder
- Counselling Skills for Foster Carers
- Protective Behaviours
- Special Learning Disabilities
- Radicalisation and Extremism
- De-Escalation
- Fostering children with disabilities
- Caring for Traumatized Children
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- Managing Disruption
- Fostering Adolescents Part 1 & 2
- The use of play in fostering
- The dietary needs and requirements of looked after children
- PACE
- Remand
- Appropriate Adult
- Supporting LGBTQ Young People
- Working in Partnership

Employees

The National Fostering Agency encourages all employees to develop professionally through accessing e-learning, webinars, training courses and practice development workshops, provided both within the agency, and externally, including Local Safeguarding Boards.

Employees continue their training under the guidance of their regulatory body, and each year they participate in an annual appraisal, part of which includes an audit and review of training needs and continuing professional development. Individual learning needs are tailored towards career development and areas of special interest, which adds value to the regional service. Each SSW has the opportunity to be a 'Team Champion' disseminating knowledge and sharing expertise in key areas for the benefit of the whole region e.g. CSE, Education, Health, Independence/Staying Put.

Team Managers benefit from a blended learning programme: *Aspire, Achieve and Advance* which develops managers to meet the challenges of the role. All Registered Managers are required to obtain the Diploma Level 5 in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children & Young People's Services.

Students

The National Fostering Agency is an active and diverse learning environment, and therefore welcomes the placement of students in the region from a number of neighbouring universities e.g. Birmingham, Coventry, Warwick. Supervising Social Workers and Managers are supported to undertake training to become qualified Practice Educators, where appropriate to their career interest and development.



Finance

The National Fostering Agency carers receives a weekly fostering allowance paid directly into their bank account and level of this allowance is dependent on the type/complexity of placement provided. In addition, all carers also receive a maintenance payment covering clothing, pocket money, birthday and seasonal allowances for the child/young person placed. Foster carers are also paid a holiday allowance equivalent to two weeks fostering allowance.

Savings for children in care are deducted at source and saved in individual accounts administered by the NFA Group.

Detailed information and guidance on rates and allowances are made available to each foster carer. All foster carers are provided with an Annual Statement.

Foster Carers are self-employed and must seek their own advice on liability for Income Tax and National Insurance. This can be accessed through FosterTalk, of which membership is funded for all foster carers by the NFA Group.

Local Authorities should directly contact the agency for information pertaining to our charges for the different types of placements and support services offered.

The agency's finances are subject to annual financial audit.



Complaints

National Fostering Agency complaints procedures aim to deal with complaints received in a prompt and equitable manner. The Registered Manager and the Quality Assurance Manager are responsible for monitoring complaints and their outcomes.

Complaints Policy

All children and adults with whom the company comes into contact have the right to receive a quality, professional service. If they do not feel they have received such a service, they have the right to complain and have that complaint listened to. All complaints will be acknowledged within seven working days, and will indicate whether it is resolvable at Stage 1, or will require Stage 2 investigation.

Stage 1 Complaints – Informal Resolution

Where possible, we aim to resolve complaints informally, at local level, and this should be the preferred option. Complainants are encouraged to talk to the person with whom they have a complaint with in the first instance as this allows opportunity to explore the issue and seek any clarification, which often leads to informal resolution.

Where this is not possible, a meeting will be convened between the complainant and the line manager of the person/s being complained about. A letter of resolution will be issued by the Registered Manager detailing how the outcome was arrived at.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, or at the outset they require the matter to be dealt with by another employee of the National Fostering Agency; they will be asked to write to the Registered Manager who will contact the complainant within seven working days to advise that the Quality Assurance Manager has been instructed to investigate the complaint.

Stage 2 Complaints – Formal Consideration

The QA Manager will undertake a formal investigation and provide a written response within 21 days outlining the outcome of the investigation.

The Registered Manager will invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the report, where necessary and appropriate.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the QA report, they must confirm the reasons for their dissatisfaction, in writing, to the Registered Manager who will arrange for the complaint to be reviewed independently within 28 days.

Stage 3 Complaints – Independent Review

If the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1 or 2, and the reasons for this are made clear in writing; the complaint will proceed to Stage 3 for independent review. This is often conducted by the Director of Quality Assurance or other Senior Director, allowing 28 days for investigation and every effort will be made to achieve complaint resolution. If the complainant remains dissatisfied they may take advice from the Regulatory Authority.

Name and Address of Inspection Body

All the activities of NFA are inspected and regulated by Ofsted who can be contacted at the following:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- General Enquiries: 0300 123 1231
- About Concerns: 0300 123 4666
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner

Children and Young People may also make a complaint to the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, based in England. They can do this by going to the appropriate website –

- www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk (for England)

Support

It is the policy of the National Fostering Agency to make its complaint procedures accessible, effective, fair and independent as possible.

Sometimes children and adults need help and support to make a complaint.

The child may have support from his or her parent, social worker, Independent Visitor or foster carer. A child who wishes to make a complaint about any aspects of his or her care should receive assistance to access independent advice and support from their

Independent Reviewing Officer. Any complaint made by a Looked After Child will also be referred to a recognised advocacy service if the child wishes.

Foster carers may enlist the help of a supporter or advocate or their Supervising Social Worker, as appropriate, to make a complaint about the agency under this policy or where appropriate, about the placing authority under the relevant local authority's complaints procedure.

Allegations of abuse

If any complaint is made to any employee of the National Fostering Agency that is clearly of a child protection nature that complaint will be immediately passed on to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the responsible authority and Ofsted will be informed.

If at any time during an investigation into a complaint it becomes clear that there may be child protection implications, the current investigation will be halted and the relevant Local Authority LADO will be notified immediately, the responsible authority and Ofsted will be informed.

Where a complaint is made against a registered person, the complaint will be investigated by the Regional Director.



Accredited Standards

Leading Improvements for Looked After Children

NFA has successfully achieved LILAC – ‘Leading Improvements for Looked after Children’, with the key objective of developing a quality framework for involvement policy and practice targeting young people in care. The young people will make use of this framework to carry out assessments of local authority or agency services.



Investors in People

The National Fostering Agency is recognised as an Investor in People and has held the Award since 2004. In October 2013 the NFA achieved the Investors in People Gold Award. NFA will continue to be an investor in people.



Customer Services Excellence Award

NFA has successfully achieved and maintained the Customer Service Excellence Award, this new Government Standard for Customer Excellence builds on the legacy of the Charter Mark and concentrates on the detailed experience of customers and actions taken by organisations to recognise and understand their customers, to give them a voice, to show how customers are listened to, and how their views shape the service. We believe that NFA are one of the first independent fostering organisations to achieve the award.





Professional Membership

CoramBAAF

The National Fostering Agency has a corporate membership with CoramBAAF. CoramBAAF promotes the highest standards of child-centered policies and services. It influences policy-makers, helps find new families for children and supports professions, adoptive parents and foster carers.

The Fostering Network

The National Fostering Agency has a corporate membership with The Fostering Network which is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering. This means that they are uniquely placed to bring people and organisations together to improve the lives of children in foster care.

The Fostering Network works to raise the profile of foster care through lobbying and campaigning for improvements in foster care at UK, national and local level.

NWG

The National Fostering Agency has a corporate membership with NWG which is a network tackling child sexual exploitation they also provide high quality training that our staff members attend.

Each staff member has a membership to NWG (purchased by National Fostering Agency) so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP)

This is a national charity that enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.



Contact Details

Essential Addresses and Contact Details

Children's Commissioner

Address: Children's Commissioner for England, sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Free and confidential contact lines for children and young people:

Tel: 0800 528 0731

Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Coram VOICE

This is a national charity that enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.

Helpline: 0808 800 5792

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk

Web: www.coramvoice.org.uk

OFSTED

The National Fostering Agency is regulated and inspected by Ofsted

Address: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

General Enquiries Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

National Fostering Agency (Midlands)

Address: National Fostering Agency, 2450 Regents Court, The Crescent, Birmingham Business Park, Solihull, West Midlands, B37 7YE

Tel: 0121 788 0477

Email: Midlandsadmin@nfa.co.uk

Web: www.nfa.co.uk

Facebook: @nfamidlands





NFA Midlands Statement of Purpose March 2019

National Fostering Agency | 2450 Regents Court | The Crescent | Birmingham Business Park
Solihull | West Midlands | B37 7YE

© National Fostering Agency 2019

R4682i