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“

It is heartening seeing children who have had to go through very tough and demanding circumstances, being given a new chance to find a new home and start a new life.”

- foster carer, annual survey
2023

Quality & Impact Report

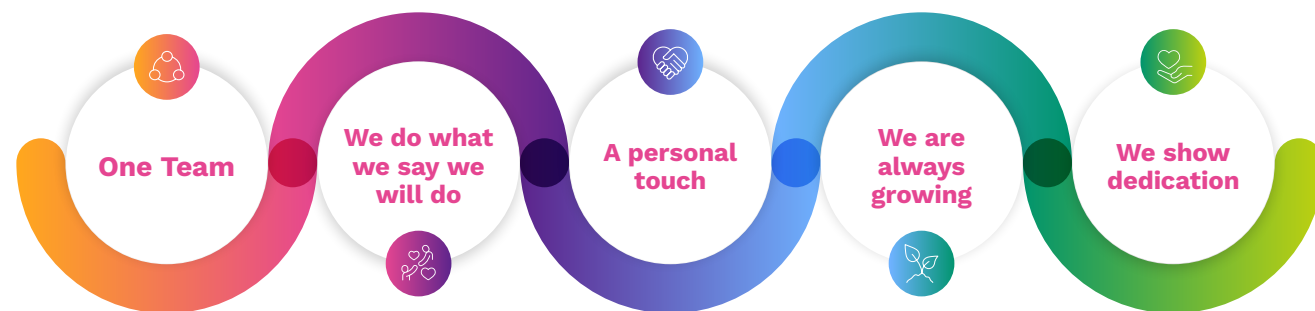
January – December 2023



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Our Values



Children are at the heart of everything we do



“ The positive impact of scale and support on opportunities and outcomes.”

It is one of the highlights of my year, to see the first draft of our Quality & Impact Report. In nearly five years leading this organisation, this is the most positive I have read. The achievements of our children and young people have been outstanding.

This has been recognised by Ofsted, as well as the Care Inspectorates in Scotland and Wales, and also by our most important stakeholders, our amazing foster carers.

As the largest fostering group in the country, our scale allows us to give outstanding support to our foster carers, which allows them to create amazing outcomes for the precious children who are entrusted to our care. This has been recognised through the feedback we have received from our foster carers, but also in the amazing educational achievements of our young people.

Our scale also allows us to invest in amazing opportunities for our young people, which shape their future. I was thrilled to meet with Hakim last year (see page 10) when he was presented with the Les Morgan Young Explorer of the Year award. Hakim is clearly a young man who

has had a difficult start in life and is now determined to grab every opportunity that is presented to him. He's growing into a terrific adult who will be a great example for all.

I was also delighted to get a text whilst I was on annual leave, from our amazing foster carer Barry. He had just picked up one of his foster girls from the station following an expedition. He described her as being “a foot taller, looks me straight in the eye, and the world is her oyster”. These opportunities are life changing for our young people.

Finally, a word of thanks to my 900 colleagues, who I know will enjoy reading this report. They all join our organisation because they want to help children and young people, and they get up in the morning every day to make sure we do that.

I hope you enjoy reading the 2023 Quality & Impact Report. If you have any feedback, please call me or one of my team at any time.

Steve Christie
Chief Executive Officer



2023 at a glance: Our impact in numbers

- Our carers created loving homes for over 4,000 children and young people during 2023.
- Our carers supported almost 300 care leavers in Staying Put or similar arrangements.
- Arun Hope, our Family Assessment Centre, was rated Good by Ofsted in its first inspection.
- 3 of our agencies went up from Good to Outstanding in Ofsted inspections during 2023.
- 68% of children have lived with us for 12 months or more and 50% for two years or more.
- 83% of our foster carers and 100% of our staff completed our Introduction to Therapeutic Parenting course. Some are now on track to complete the longer accredited course.
- 100% of our agencies inspected were rated Good or Outstanding by regulators in England and Wales in 2023.

“The voice of the child is significant in the fostering agency.”
- Fostering Solutions North West Ofsted report, August 2023

“All children are accessing education and the majority are making excellent progress. Foster carers benefit from access to expert support from an education professional in the agency who helps secure the right resources and assessments that children are entitled to. As a result, children are meeting their potential and achieving qualifications that will positively impact on their adult lives.”
- Brighter Futures Fostercare, Ofsted report December 2023

“The agency recognises that childhood trauma can have a negative impact on a child’s ability to achieve academically. Therefore, the agency offers children the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the British Exploring Society... This support helps to improve children’s learning and development.”
- Reach Out Care Ofsted report, June 2023

“He absolutely loved the experience and came back home saying he is a man now! The experience filled him with confidence and allowed him to blossom. We are all very proud of him.”
- foster parent, Duke of Edinburgh Award feedback

Clinical outcomes

More than **2,000** clinical sessions delivered across National Fostering Group.

12 Neurodevelopmental assessments completed for CYP on local authority waiting lists.

Foster carer feedback

92% foster to make a difference to a young person’s life.

86% described fostering as their job, career or vocation.

86% said our commitment to their foster children was a key reason for staying.

79% rated us very highly for the quality of the support and services.

71% are happy with the number of children they can look after.

Educational achievement

- 96%** overall pass rate for English qualifications.
- 95%** overall pass rate for Mathematics qualifications.
- 97%** examination pass rate across all qualifications entered at age 16.
- 100%** of pupils attending a special school achieved qualifications in line with EHCP outcomes.
- 85%** of pupils achieved a combined English and Mathematics GCSE (England, Wales and NI).
- 95%** of pupils achieved an English and Mathematics Scottish National Qualification.
- 98%** moved from secondary school into a positive education, employment or training placement.
- 100%** of unaccompanied asylum seekers (16+) were enrolled on an appropriate course.

Children’s feedback

- 4,000** surveys were completed with children and young people.
- 97%** say they feel safe in their home.
- 97%** say they are well cared for in their home.
- 96%** say they have fun and opportunities to enjoy themselves in their home.

Opportunities

- 25** young people aged 14+ were working towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award with their agency.
- 10** DoE participants were able to undertake the expedition section of the award in the summer.
- Many others are working towards one of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards through their school or another setting.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

British Exploring Society

- 17** young people went on a 10-day wilderness expedition to the Scotland Highlands.
- 4** young people went on a three-week wilderness expedition to the Canadian Yukon.
- All** also attended training weekends and other expedition preparation events.
- 2** won awards recognising their efforts on expedition and four more were nominated.

Educational attainment

By supporting foster parents to create safe, secure, nurturing environments, we build the conditions for vulnerable children and young people to focus on their education.

Following several years of educational disruption due to the pandemic, 2023 was only the second year where education and exams returned to normal patterns.

Despite the challenges of the past few years, our young people worked hard and achieved great educational success.

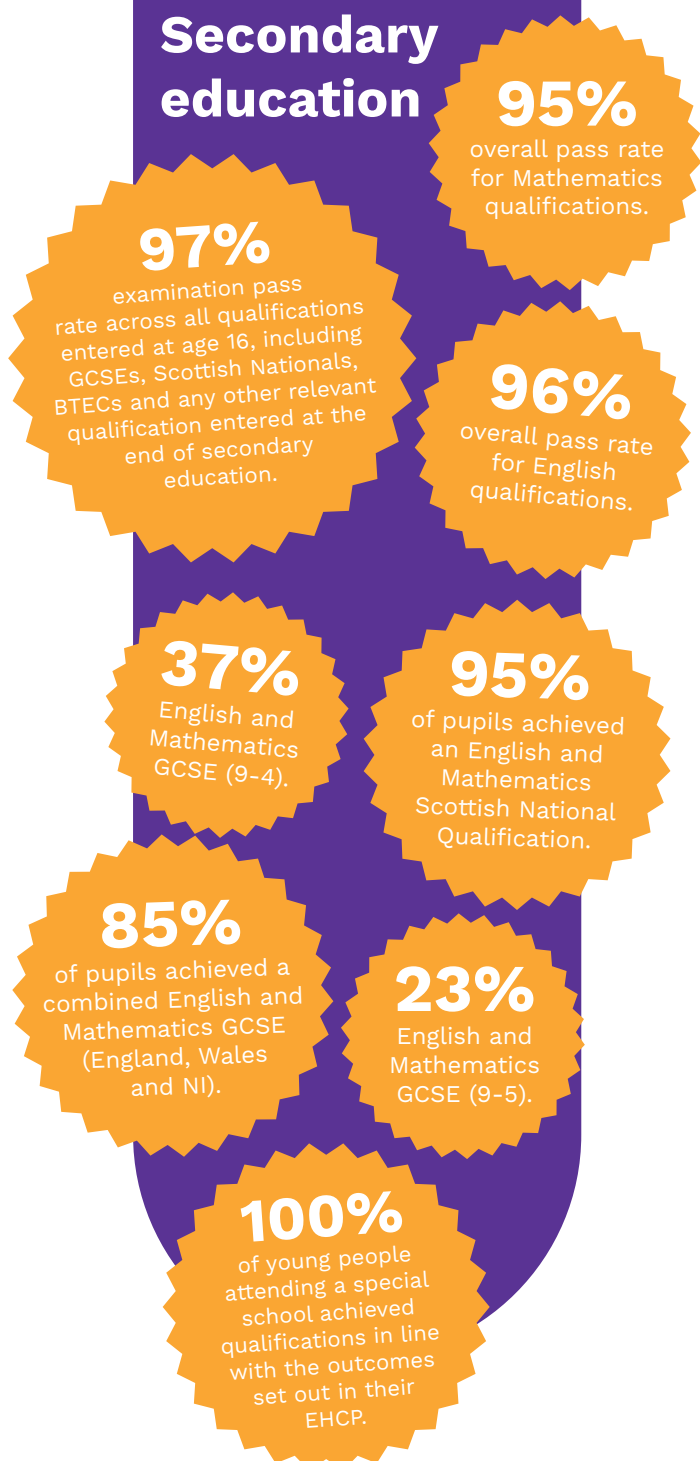
Each child's starting point and journey is different and some of these results highlight amazing outcomes for young people

“

The agency has an exemplary education support service. This helps children to make exceptional progress with their education. The education support service provides children with access to digital learning and careers advice.”

- Reach Out Care, Ofsted report June 2023

Secondary education



Education participation post-16



Clinical services

In 2023, we've continued to grow our clinical services, offering high quality, individualised and diverse clinical services to children and young people, carers and staff.

Our services are forward-thinking, effective, and proficient in responding to the growing complex needs of children we care for.

The clinical focus is to respond to all referrals in a timely fashion and curious way to ensure the right services are accurately allocated and everyone can work collaboratively. Our clinical approach is to work systemically, helping those in close relationships to better understand and support each other by exploring historic patterns and how they manifest and influence current interactions.



Positive clinical outcomes

We're committed to offering a wide variety of clinical services and offer all agencies:

- Reflective practice sessions for staff
- Clinical Process groups for foster carers
- Clinical Consultation Service for foster carers and staff
- Child and young person psychotherapy and other identified therapies
- Neurodevelopmental diagnostic service

We've improved and further developed specialist programmes, such as **Invictus** and **Bridge to Foster**, offering a tailored care package that effectively support more complex clinical presentations.

The delivery of these services has ensured that our children, carers, and staff have access to specialist knowledge, guidance and support required in meeting our identified needs.

This year, we have delivered more than 2,000 clinical sessions across National Fostering Group. Additionally, 12 children and young people, who had been unable to be seen due to local authority waiting times, accessed Neurodevelopmental Assessments through our team in a realistic time frame.

- Placement stability
- Foster carer retention
- Challenging stereotypes and breaking cycles
- Foster carers and children being able to have a safe and enjoyable relationship
- Improvement in children being more able to meet developmental milestones - socially, psychologically/emotionally, and educationally
- Foster carers' confidence, skills and knowledge increased
- Staff therapeutic understanding and skills enhanced



Children's feedback

Working with our children and young people, we created a bespoke online tool, My Youth Voice. This tool allows them to give feedback that helps us understand more about their lives and how they feel in their home. We use the responses to track their progress and action plan to improve key elements of their life. In 2023:

4,000

surveys were completed with children and young people.

97%

say they are well cared for in their home.

97%

say they feel safe in their home.

96%

say they have fun and opportunities to enjoy themselves in their home.

“

With the support of supervising social workers, they use the service's user-friendly app My Youth Voice, to express their views about their care and support. Over time, this creates a valuable record of children's information, which tracks their progress to inform outcome planning.”

- NFA Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales inspection report October 2023

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award



We work in partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to deliver the three levels of award in a smaller, more manageable setting for those young people who struggle to access it elsewhere.

All our agencies are able to deliver the programmes through support work. In addition, foster carer birth children are able to access this great opportunity through us.



25 young people of 14 years and older were working towards a Duke of Edinburgh's Award with their agency during 2023.

10 of these young people were able to undertake the expedition section of the award in the summer of 2023, our second set of expeditions since the pandemic.

Additionally, many of our young people are working towards one of the awards through their school, or another setting, for example, Scouts or Cadets.



British Exploring Society



We work in partnership with British Exploring Society to provide life-changing opportunities to young people in wild places that allow them to reconnect with the natural world and their own personal development.

Two of our young people won awards recognising their efforts on expedition and four more were nominated.



17 young people went on a 10-day wilderness expedition to the Scotland Highlands.

4 young people went on a three-week wilderness expedition to the Canadian Yukon.

All young people on these programmes also attended training weekends and other expedition preparation events.

Feedback from 2023 expeditions

Continued overleaf >

“

He rarely tells me about his day on a normal day, but he chatted non-stop in great detail about the expedition on the way home after I picked him up. He was full of confidence about how much he'd learnt. I know I say this a lot, but last year he would never have been able to do this.”

- foster carer

Hakim, Young Explorer of the Year

In March 2023, Hakim won British Exploring Society's 'Les Morgan Young Leader of the Year' award. Hakim, who is placed by Fostering Solutions North West, was among 171 young people who attended one of seven expeditions with British Exploring Society in 2022.

The 'Les Morgan Young Explorer of the Year Award' is awarded to a Young Explorer who has shown exceptional initiative or leadership in adverse circumstances on an expedition. Hakim received this prestigious award for the Scottish Highlands expedition he attended in Summer 2022.



An extract from Hakim's nomination:

"Hakim's honesty, pragmatism, resourcefulness, passion for exploration of place and self and great kindness towards his peers and the leadership team were a motivating force for all. Hakim balanced a real maturity, especially in challenging circumstances and when helping others, alongside a youthful and cheeky humour which found laughter from the most tired Young Explorers and helped build an ethos of positivity.

"Hakim spoke honestly about the challenges he has faced and helped build a Fire culture of openness and belief in individuals' ability to affect positive change in their lives, something I think will be carried forward amongst all those in his Fire. "I would like to thank Hakim for his participation and contribution and hope that he takes with him a great sense of achievement and potential for succeeding in future challenges and supporting others to do so too."

“

With each passing day, the pain of walking so far is subsiding, and he is reminiscing about good memories. And every day he is in contact with fellow explorers from his group. I have already seen an improvement in his self-confidence."

- foster carer

“

She had the time of her life embracing the challenges before her. She loved the nature, is no longer afraid of bees or spiders, swam in freezing cold lochs, and enjoyed not having her phone. She stands taller than when she left, she is more confident, she looks people in the eye and realises what a strong person she is."

- foster carer

Ronan wins national young explorer inspiration award

In November 2023, Ronan (16) from NFA North West, was announced as the winner of British Exploring Society's 'Moodgal Inspiration Award'.

This award is presented to a Young Explorer, who through their kindness or generosity to others, or through their fundraising efforts, have empowered themselves, and inspired and helped others.

Ronan went to Canada for almost four weeks in the summer and he was a big hit with everyone: British Exploring Leaders and other young explorers alike. He is one of 150 young people who attended an expedition with the charity in the 2023 exploration year.



An extract from Ronan's nomination:

"The emotional maturity displayed by Ronan was exceptional. He managed to be simultaneously a confidante, friend and guard, and was immensely helpful to both the other Young Explorers and to the Leadership team. "Ronan proved that he has developed strong interpersonal skills and empathy by forming a positive bond with everyone. He managed to get on with everybody and was the person that everyone could easily turn towards to have a good laugh with. He was a motivational force for all when they needed it most. Ronan

is incredibly self-aware for his age and has a genuine willingness to help people, something which I can see him carrying forward in future life. "I can see him being an inspiring Social Leader one day, and I can't think of anyone better suited to win this award in its inaugural year. His growth from his first expedition in Scotland to his time in Yukon alone is an incredible testimony for the development opportunity that British Exploring Society provides."

“

She has never been away from home before and she is not what I would describe as outdoorsy either and I am thrilled that she spent 11 days with mostly strangers so far away from home and came back having enjoyed herself."

- foster carer

You can read more about Hakim, Ronan and the others on British Exploring Society's website:

<https://www.britishexploring.org/announcing-2022s-young-explorer-of-the-year/>

Inspections in 2023

A total of 11 National Fostering Group agencies were inspected by **Ofsted** and **Care Inspectorate Wales** during 2023.

All our agencies inspected were rated Good or Outstanding by regulators in England and Wales. Three went from Good to Outstanding. Arun Hope, our Family Assessment Centre, was rated Good by Ofsted in its first inspection.



JANUARY 2023

GOOD

“Warm and attentive foster carers care for children. They know them well. Foster carers provide care specific to the needs of each child. The aim is to give children positive experiences. The community model of support used by the agency is a particular strength. It gives children a wider social life. Foster carers say that it is like an extended family. The quality of the relationships between foster carers and professionals is good. Feedback from placing authorities is positive.”



JANUARY 2023

GOOD

“Children benefit from being cared for and loved by child centred foster carers. Children make good progress in all areas as a direct result of the time and effort put in by foster carers and supervising social workers. Children’s school attendance and educational achievement are good, and a virtual homework club provided by the agency is a useful additional resource. For those children who remain living with their foster carer after they reach 18, some make excellent progress, for example, going to university or college.”



MARCH 2023

GOOD

“Warm and attentive foster carers provide good care to children. They know the children well and provide care that is specific to the needs of each child. The agency celebrates diversity and is inclusive of all children. The diversity of foster carers and staff in the agency ensures that children’s religious and cultural needs are understood well. Many children are able to live with foster carers who share their culture, religion and/or ethnicity. Biracial placements are managed well, and foster carers have a good understanding of children’s individual cultural needs. This enables children to practise their faith and observe traditions, which helps them to develop a positive sense of themselves and others.”



JUNE 2023

OUTSTANDING

“Children develop a significant sense of belonging in secure fostering families. The agency supports carers to provide permanence for the children in their care. All children who have turned 18 years old in the past year have chosen to remain living with their foster carers under ‘staying put’ arrangements. One child said, ‘I feel part of the family.’ Another child said that they see their foster carer as their ‘mam’. This reflects the strong sense of belonging felt by children and young people in their foster families.”



AUGUST 2023

OUTSTANDING

“Children experience child-centred, individualised care and support. Foster carers are extremely dedicated and show exceptional levels of commitment and resilience in caring for children who have experienced trauma and loss. This ensures that children flourish in all areas of their social and emotional development. Children experience total acceptance with their foster families. One foster carer described the child living with them as ‘the heart of our family’. Children recognise the strength of these attachments. One young person, who has remained with his foster carers into adulthood, told the inspector that his experience was so positive because ‘they just loved us’.



NFA London South

AUGUST 2023

GOOD

“Foster carers and supervising social workers have positive and nurturing relationships with children. Foster carers and supervising social workers support children to achieve in education and to have high aspirations. All children are either in school or college. Children achieve good grades in their GCSE and A-Level exams. One child has been offered a place at the University of Oxford. Children spoken to by inspectors have high aspirations, with one wanting to be a doctor and another a football coach. The fostering agency recognises children’s progress through achievement awards.”



OCTOBER 2023

“National Fostering Agency Wales clearly places children’s well-being and safety at the centre of its service. Children experience good quality care from skilled, robustly recruited, trained foster carers who provide stability and responsive care to children’s needs. Children’s education and health needs are prioritised and a wide range of support is available to flexibly respond to particular issues as they arise. Children have a say about their care and an empowering, rights-based approach ensures they are listened to and responded to in a safe manner.”



Alliance Foster Care™

NOVEMBER 2023

GOOD

“Children are supported to make good progress. They have strong bonds with their foster carers, who speak with warmth and affection about the children in their care. One foster carer remarked that their child’s progress was amazing. Foster carers had supported the child to no longer be ‘scared of the world’. Foster carers described caring for this child as a privilege. Another foster carer described a quiet child transforming into a child who could now babble, walk and play. Many children live with their foster carers for long periods, often several years.”



NOVEMBER 2023

OUTSTANDING

“Children make exceptional progress from their starting points and form safe and secure attachments with their foster parents and their families. Foster parents develop and maintain relationships with children that enhance the children’s sense of belonging. One child said that they ‘love’ living with their foster parents. Another child referred to their foster parents as ‘mum’ and ‘dad’. Children enjoy long-term and stable placements. This is because foster parents are committed to providing the children with loving homes.”



DECEMBER 2023

OUTSTANDING

“Children receive the care and encouragement they need to make exceptional progress from their starting points. Foster carers are aspirational for children and support them to enjoy opportunities that enhance their lives. This includes children participating in trips and expeditions to other countries, allowing them to experience different cultures. These are once-in-a-lifetime experiences that help children build positive memories, confidence and skills. Foster carers receive high levels of support and therapeutic guidance to help them build secure and trusting relationships with children. As a result, children benefit from stability in fostering households that provide them with a sense of belonging and permanence.”



DECEMBER 2023

GOOD

“Parents receive good-quality care and support. Placement plans are clear, and child focused while also clear about the needs of the parent. Staff involve the parents in the development of these plans. Parents and their children make great progress. This is because of the warm and trusting relationships that parents and children develop with the empathic staff that support them. Children are relaxed and settled both with staff, and in the care of their parents. Interactions between staff and parents are respectful. One parent said that the staff are very attuned to the family’s needs, and that the staff support and encourage them to make decisions.”

Celebrating achievements

We share the pride of children's successes. It's so important to recognise how children may have had experiences that interrupted their development. Each arrives with unique needs for their care and development.

These examples are based on real achievements that our agencies compiled for inclusion in our Advent of Star Achievers celebrations. They're a snapshot of what achievement looks like. They also demonstrate how our carers are providing the necessary environment where children can thrive.

Danny, 10, once so scared of water that he couldn't wash his hair, did his 10m swimming badge.

Corey, 21, graduated from university in Film with a 1st class honours degree.

Dean, 19 months, determined to crawl and then walk despite set backs.

Michael, 16, signed paperwork with the local council to change his surname.

Luna, 10, achieved a Level 7 Award in trampolining for completing a backdrop.

Saima, 14, earned an Unsung Hero award in Spanish and Star Student in science.

Tyler, 16 and partially sighted, passed his GCSEs.

Josh, 20, who's dyslexic, studied every spare minute for 2 years and got an HNC with distinction.

James, 8, stayed dry at home and school for 5 days in a row.

Sky, 7, can tie her own shoelaces.

“For the first time I feel happy and safe in a foster placement. When I walked into the house I felt at home.”
- foster child, quoted in NFA London South, Ofsted report August 2023

Annual Foster Carer Survey

In November 2023, our carers were invited to share their views on the support they receive. We also asked about their thoughts on how we can better meet their needs.

This ongoing feedback will help us attract the right people to help us transform young lives. Many scored us very highly on support, services and training, and were happy with many other aspects of fostering with us.

“The efficiency of both management team and my supervising social worker are brilliant. We also get to meet senior managers and staff at social events so we know who we deal with in a situation. There are lots of other things to write about, too many to mention here.”

92%
foster to make a difference to a young person's life.

86%
described fostering as their job, career or vocation.

70%
attended local support groups in person and virtually.

86%
said agency support has improved (43%) or stayed the same (46%).

70%
reported that their SSWs are “there when I need them”.

86%
said our commitment to their foster children was a key reason for staying.

82%
are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with our training provision.

71%
are happy with the number of children they can look after.

79%
rated us very highly for the quality of the support and services.

The survey also highlighted where we can do better – for example, helping carers access more benefits, improving agency support, considering the needs of the wider family, and expanding training topics. We take all feedback seriously and are putting plans in place to achieve greater, continuous positive impact on the children in our care.



UK fostering **at its best.**

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