

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands



Action for Children Fostering Midlands

Achieving positive outcomes for young people through a ‘secure base approach’

As one of the largest national Children’s Charities, Action for Children’s aim is to help those children in greatest need. We do this by providing a wide and innovative range of services and by influencing change at local and national level.

Dr. Thomas Bowman Stephenson, a Methodist Minister, founded Action for Children in 1869. Since then, the charity has developed and grown in response to the changing needs of children, young people and families and in line with the best practice of the day.

Although Action for Children continues to benefit from the support of the Methodist Church, we positively welcome staff and volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and religions who share Stephenson’s vision of serving the most vulnerable children, whoever they may be. We acknowledge and celebrate this diversity.

Action for Children is committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their full potential. Our focus is to work in partnership with stakeholders’ foster carers, relevant professionals, children and young people to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people placed with our foster carers.

Our staff and foster carers strive to provide secure, nurturing placements which facilitate and support children and young people in achieving their full potential and improving their life chances both within our foster placements and beyond. We aim to inspire children and young people to have high aspirations for their futures whilst learning practical, day to day skills necessary for adulthood, giving them a sense of achievement.

We involve children and young people, their placing local authorities, families (where appropriate), foster carers, other professionals/services, in planning and goal setting. Foster carers are given clear guidance and support from staff in addition to training and resources such as the foster carers secure base training and literature which highlight the importance of identifying, monitoring and reaching good individual outcomes for children and young people.

**Statement of Purpose
Action for Children Fostering Midlands**

My foster carer adds me to her family and treats me like her own

I am supported to see my mum, dad and brother

Children and young people in our fostering service have told us

My foster carer meets my needs with food warmth bath and showers

I like eating together it feels like home

Fostering Midlands have registered as a service since February 2014, it is however part of the wider West fostering service based within Action for Children.

Action for Children

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

OUR FOSTER CARERS

Fostering Midlands registered in 2014. It presently has 7 approved households based in the East and West Midlands. The foster carers are representative of the diverse ethnic communities where children and young people live. Different religions are also practised and carers have differing cultures.

Registered Office:

**ACTION FOR CHILDREN
Fostering Midlands
Wheatfield Close
Smiths Wood**

**Statement of Purpose
Action for Children Fostering Midlands**

B36 0QP

Telephone: 0121 770 0591

Central Office:

**ACTION FOR CHILDREN
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford
WD18 8AG**

Tel: 01923 361500

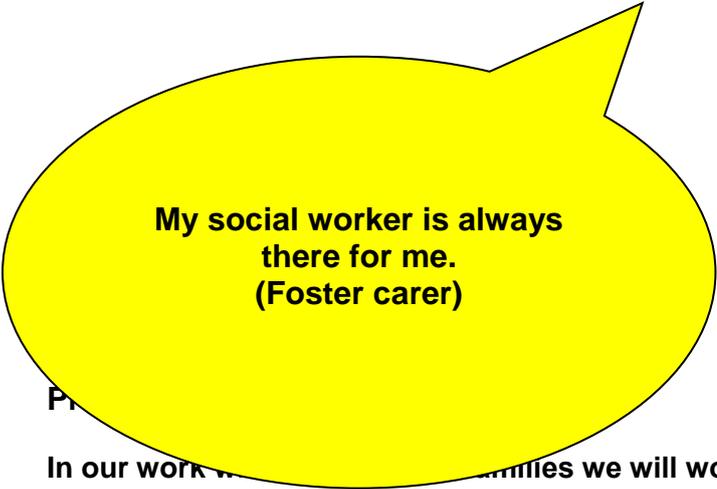


**Children always
come first, they
are most
definitely child
centred
(Foster carer)**



**Leadership is
strong more like
being 'mentored'.
All the staff are
approachable
(Foster carer)**

What others have said about Fostering Midlands



**My social worker is always
there for me.
(Foster carer)**



J and L are excellent carers. I have not seen a child grow and develop so well since being placed with them. It seems this is a career made for them. I am very happy with the care and support they have given to. Birth mum and siblings have nothing but praise for J and L. I am amazed this is their first placement" (local authority social worker)

Pr

In our work with families we will work within the 'S'

Statement of Purpose Action for Children Fostering Midlands

Secure Base provides a positive framework for therapeutic care giving helping children and young people to work towards greater security and build resilience. We focus on and support interactions between the young person and foster carers in the home environment. The approach also supports how those relationships can enable the young person to develop competence in the outside world of school, peer group and community.

With the approach we begin with the needs and behaviour of the young person and then explore the mind of the foster carer using supervision, secure base assessments and clinical consultation. We support Foster carers to draw on their own experiences of good care giving and help them to develop new ways of caregiving through therapy sessions and training and supervision.

The secure base Model (Beek and Schofield 2004) has five domains. The first four are drawn from attachment theory with an additional dimension 'family membership' that is relevant for all children but particularly for children separated from their birth family and looked after by Foster carers.

Each domain can be associated with developmental benefit for the child and inform our care standards it also frames our principals and work with foster carers and young people it is however important to bear in that each domain is not entirely distinct from each other but they overlap and combine with each other. The domains are;

Availability	Helping he child to trust
Sensitivity	Helping the child to manage feelings and behaviour
Acceptance	Building the child's self esteem
Co-operative	Helping the child to feel effective and be cooperative
Family Membership	Helping the child to belong

Availability-Helping he child to trust

- Put children and young people first.
- Will review the service and care which is being provided to children and young people on a regular basis and consider ways (including children views) of improving services and will strive for continuous improvement.
- Are developing information systems to monitor our performance and to measure outcomes for children because it is important to us that our services are effective and represent Best Value and enhance the experience of the child in care.
- Are committed to working co-operatively with other agencies to ensure comprehensive and co-ordinated services for children, young people and their families keeping the child at the centre.
- Endeavour to establish a positive care environment which reflects Action for Children's Behaviour Management standards and supports children and young people.
- Will consult and involve children and young people regarding decisions which affect them, as Fully as possible.

Sensitivity - Helping the child to manage feelings and behaviour

- Deliver services that recognise and build on the strengths of children and young people from all cultures and religious backgrounds, ensuring the care provided meets their needs and enables them to achieve their potential.
- Provide information about our services to all children, young people and families who are entitled to receive them, in ways that are appropriate to them.
- Ensure the progress of young people but understand young people may regress for different reasons
- See at the child's behaviours in context
- Provide experiences the young person may have missed out on earlier in life

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands

Acceptance - Building the child's self esteem

- Ensure that children and young people who are looked after have the opportunity to develop a positive identity and high self-esteem.
- Advocate for additional support when needed.
- Help children to have an understanding of their history through therapeutic methods such as life story work and play therapy.
- Foster carers to develop an awareness of self
- Seek additional support for children with additional needs actively working to remove barriers to success

Co-operative - Helping the child to feel effective and be cooperative

- Encourage children and young people to develop respect for themselves and others.
- Provide families with support, when they need it, to carry out their care giving responsibilities.
- Listen to the views of children, young people and their families, of foster carers, relevant professionals and of our own staff in planning and carrying out all our activities.
- Work in partnership with families and the professionals committed to supporting them.
- Are aware of all the needs of disabled children and young people and seek their views and active participation in their care plans wherever appropriate.

- Believe that children and young people have a right to be protected from harm.
-
- Strive to ensure that children and young people are able to develop in a healthy environment to achieve their potential including accessing and participating opportunities available in the community as responsible citizens.
- Aim to ensure that all young people prior to leaving foster care are prepared for independence by providing support for the transition into adulthood.

Family Membership - Helping the child to belong

- Believe that where possible, children and young people are best cared for in their own families. Where this is not possible, we aim to create a positive experience of family life through foster care.
- Work to ensure that when children and young people are placed with foster carers, their identity including contact and ties with their birth family members are preserved if this is in the best interest of the child.
- Identify and plan for ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender and disability needs of children and young people in the process of matching them with their carers.
- Believe that where possible, children and young people should be placed within a family of their own racial, cultural and religious background with common language.
- Believe that 'black' children and young people should have access to adults from a similar ethnic origin, operating from positions of strength and authority giving the opportunity to develop strong identity and positive self-esteem, and to develop their skills in dealing with prejudices which they may experience during their lives.
- Provide stable placements

Aims

The aim of Action for Children – Midlands is to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable children and young people through the provision of high quality foster placements for 'Looked After'

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands

Children and the necessary training and support services to maintain and develop these placements.

We also aim to:

- Use our resources responsibly and efficiently.
- Work to high professional standards within a culture of continuous improvement.
- Act as a good employer by providing staff with the training, management and support they need to carry out their tasks effectively
- Lobby and campaign for public policy changes in the best interests of the people with whom we work, in pursuit of social justice and social inclusion.

Objectives

- Action for Children Fostering Midlands, through the secure base approach seeks to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people in society through the provision of safe, secure and successful foster placements.
- The best interests of the children and young people involved are paramount and their safety is the first duty of the fostering service. As a consequence, prospective foster carers are carefully and thoroughly assessed by means of a competency based assessment, in a way that is fair, transparent and respectful.
- A wide range of potential foster carers are welcomed to the process. We believe that we should include all groups of suitable people for consideration as foster carers, by doing so, we are better able to achieve a good match between the strengths and parenting abilities of foster carers and the needs of the children referred to the service.
- Once a child or young person is matched with a foster carer, our services are designed to promote the success of the placement by providing support to meet the particular needs of the child or young person, in order to maintain the placement successfully.
- Action for Children Fostering midlands is provided by highly skilled, professional social workers, who have chosen to specialise in the field of foster care. They receive supervision from experienced managers and engage in continual learning and development in order to provide the best possible service to the children and young people in their care.
- Finding the right families for children and young people is often a complex task, involving a number of different organisations. Action for Children Fostering Midlands is committed to working co-operatively with other agencies to help achieve best practice and good matching, thus creating positive outcomes for children and young people.

Matching and making placements

Our service aims to provide a range of placements so that children can be appropriately matched with foster carers with the appropriate skills, knowledge, family structure, ethnic and religious background and geographical location.

Safeguarding children and young people

Action for Children Fostering Midlands employs robust processes when recruiting foster carers to ensure that the placements we provide are safe for children and young people. As part of the assessment process, applicants have to undertake Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands

checks. Checks are made with the local authorities and health authorities where applicants have resided. We undertake thorough referee visits and contact ex-partners as appropriate, to ensure that we have robust information about applicants. Applicants are also subject to a medical, the outcome of which will inform the assessment process. Where necessary we employ the support of our therapist to support assessments.

Our service is committed to sound planning when making placements and will ensure that relevant and detailed information is sought from referring local authorities in order to inform the matching process. The service works with referring social workers to complete a comprehensive assessment of risk and matching pro-forma which will identify appropriate placement matching for the child or young person. The service endeavours to involve children and young people within the matching process by seeking their views where possible. We are developing electronic family books for Foster carers to share with children prior to being placed.

Every fostering family has a Safer Care Plan which takes into account the specific needs of the child or young person placed and the members of the fostering family. This plan along with a detailed Risk Assessment and Health and Safety Checks are updated and reviewed regularly.

Our supervising social workers make sure they have time alone with the children and young people placed on a regular basis. Our Young person's practitioner undertakes direct solution focussed work with young people as directed using the 'secure base approach' They form meaningful relationships with children and young people which allows them the opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts about their care and potentially disclose any concerns. Every child and young person is given verbal and printed information about how to make complaints or raise concerns if there is anything they are unhappy about. We seek feedback from children for the foster carer's initial six months and subsequent annual reviews, using different methods appropriate to a child's age, understanding and level of engagement. We undertake two unannounced visits to our foster carer households every year, although this number can be increased if we feel the situation warrants this.

Our staff and carers undertake Safeguarding and Child Protection training modules. Our Registered Manager has systems in place which provide oversight of and compliance with both Schedule 6 Monitoring and Schedule 7 Notifications (Fostering Regulations).

Complaints

The service utilises Action for Children's Complaints Procedure. The context for our complaints procedures is effective customer care, with service standards and service level agreements where appropriate, and with regular dialogue and review with customers of the service provided.

The purpose of our complaints handling procedures is to ensure that we:

- Listen and are responsive to people who raise an issue with us.
- Respond swiftly and at a level close to the point of service delivery.
- Are fair and consistent.
- Offer solutions and/or explanations.
- Offer complainants' recourse to someone more senior/more independent if they wish.
- Ensure that staff who are subject to complaints receive support.
- Respect confidentiality
- Record complaints consistently, and monitor what we record.
- Use complaints positively as an opportunity for learning and improvement.
- Evaluate ourselves, reflect and learn in order to change and improve the service

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands

Children who run away or are missing from care

The safety and welfare of the children and young people in our placements is paramount and we treat any incidence of a child or young person missing from placement with the high priority and concern. We provide information and written guidance to carers and members of staff regarding reporting and recording procedures for such eventualities. We provide our carers with a copy of the missing person protocols for their own locality, that of the child's local authority and our own guidance. Our actions would include completing Schedule 7 Notifications, informing relevant parties, e.g. police, local authority, Ofsted, parents (if appropriate), etc. Once the child or young person is safely back in placement, we ensure they are debriefed and involve their local authority in planning to try and prevent further incidents occurring.

Promoting good health and wellbeing

Children and young people living with Action for Children foster carers are all registered with a local GP and dentist. Exercise, which is fun and a healthy diet are encouraged. Foster carers are provided with training on first aid, food and hygiene, sexual health and substance misuse.

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

Leisure Activities

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

Some children or young people may also wish to become involved in voluntary work activities, such as fundraising, supporting others or environmental work; and Action for Children foster carers encourage and support all of our children and young people in becoming active and positive community citizens.

Children are encouraged and supported to access activities during the school days and after school to enhance their experiences.

The service offers the young people two events per year in the summer and winter. The choice of event is informed by the young people and Foster carers.

Promoting educational attainment

Action for Children understands that many looked after children and young people face obstacles to maintaining high achievement levels in school. We make it a priority to give all the support, encouragement and practical help we can to remove the obstacles. Taking learning from research in practice, we monitor placements to make sure that carers and staff are employing all the strategies shown to work in supporting fostered children and young people's education and have high aspirations for all of our children and young people.

Action for Children staff and carers work closely with schools, to help teachers understand how best to support our children and young people in the classroom and school environment. If necessary,

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands

foster carers will act as 'pushy parents' to advocate for the child or young person to get the support they deserve and need.

Foster carers work patiently and creatively with children and young people to support them with their school work. Extra-curricular activities are supported and creative ways are found to engage children or young people who may have had bad experiences with school or who struggle to keep control of their feelings and behaviours in a classroom setting.

Where this is an agreed part of the Care Plan, children and young people may have access to private tutors if they are not in full time education. Where necessary we advocate on the child or young person's behalf for these resources to be put in place, such as pupil premium or disability living allowance.

Promoting independence and adult life skills

As a service we have started to experience young people who having reached the age of eighteen and continue to remain with their foster carers through 'Staying Put' arrangements until they are ready to move on.

However research informs us this is not always possible or appropriate and we recognise that the reality for most young people leaving care, is that they have to face the challenge of independent adult living, often before they are ready or fully equipped to do so. Action for Children foster carers and support workers work hard to prepare young people for this by teaching them 'life skills' from as early as possible, for example, helping with the shopping, cooking, saving regularly in a bank account throughout the time living with the foster carer, right through to learning about tenancies and benefits when they are approaching independence.

We monitor outcomes for children during this transition and closely offer support through the young person practitioner who provides the support the Foster carer care giving during this time. We also use local processes to help the young person to develop life skills which is also used to evidence where the gaps are in a young person's independent living skills, to inform pathway planning and help to plan for the most helpful way forward.

Our foster carers have access to our Barclays sponsored Money Skills Training and materials, which provides them with guidance on how to develop a young person's budgeting and awareness of financial issues.

Providing High Quality Foster Carers and Placements

Recruitment of Foster Carers

Action for Children Fostering Midlands seeks to recruit foster carers throughout the East and West Midlands.

The Marketing Officer makes best use of local and internet based resources to promote the fostering service, dispel myths and recruit skilled and interested people. An Information Pack is sent to enquirers, which details the recruitment, preparation and approval processes. This is followed up by an initial visit and then allocation to an assessing social worker, if appropriate.

The interests of the children and young people are paramount, their safety and well-being is the primary consideration of the fostering service. As a consequence, prospective foster carers are carefully and thoroughly assessed by means of a competency-based assessment in a way which is fair, transparent and respectful. A wide range of potential foster carers are welcome (except in the case of those with certain criminal convictions). Our recruitment process enables us to approve a

Statement of Purpose

Action for Children Fostering Midlands

variety of safe, skilled carers who offer a range of strengths and parenting abilities.

Preparation of Foster Carers

Prospective foster carers who proceed with an application undertake the Skills to Foster Preparation course which is delivered in modules. Our Skills to Foster Training is heavily influenced by the secure base approach providing a strong knowledge base for applicants starting their fostering career. The 3 day course explores the following areas:

- Entry into Care and children in care
- Child development
- Behaviour support
- Secure base approach
- Building attachments
- Working together
- Separation and loss
- Allegations and safeguarding
- Contact
- Transitions
- Foster carer's experience
- The child's journey

We include care experienced by young people, and experienced foster carers in the foster carer preparation training.

Assessment of Foster Carers

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

Approval and Review of Foster Carers

Action for Children has Fostering Panels which meet in Bristol on a monthly basis. Our Panels are constituted in keeping with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and has representation which includes Action for Children social workers, managers, and independent representatives including a foster carer, a young person with care experience, a former local authority manager and a medical advisor. Prospective foster carers are invited to attend part of the Panel Meeting where their application is being considered. Foster carer approval is subject to annual review and additional carer reviews will be held where any complaints or allegations arise or at the request of foster carers. All Foster Carer Reviews will consider the views of placing social workers, young people who have been placed or are in placement as well as the carers and their supervising social Worker.

Support and development of foster carers

Approved foster carers are supervised and visited at least monthly, and will receive additional support visits where required. Out of office hours support is provided to foster carers by qualified

Statement of Purpose Action for Children Fostering Midlands

social worker operational staff with management back up who are available on a rota basis during evenings, weekends and bank holiday periods. Foster carers' support groups meet regularly in Midlands.

The Service is committed to encouraging the on-going development of its foster carers and works with foster carers to identify learning needs. The service has implemented a carer induction programme and supports carers in achieving completion of the TSD Foster Carer Induction and training standards, within 1 year of approval. The service delivers a relevant Training Programme each year which includes elements of core training and more specialist post-induction elements. Foster carers attend training at one day per week over four weeks to train in the Secure Base approach, they go on to attending yearly refresher courses.

Matching and making placements

Action for Children Fostering Midlands aims to provide a range of placements so that children and young people can be appropriately matched with foster carers with the appropriate skills, knowledge, family structure, ethnic background and geographical location. We work in partnership with children and placing authorities to increase the range of choice in placements.

The range of needs Action for Children is able to meet

We successfully have recruited and will continue to recruit and develop skilled and experienced people as professional foster carers, who are able to offer specialist placements in the community to children and young people who have complex backgrounds and needs, including:

- Children and young people with additional and complex needs, children and young people requiring short breaks, task centred and long term placements
- Children and young people who display challenging behaviours
- Children and young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Children and young people with post-traumatic stress disorders and attachment difficulties
- Children and young people who self-harm
- Children and young people with eating disorders
- Children and young people with autism and Asperger's syndrome
- Children and young people who may have engaged in sexually harmful behaviours
- Children and young people who have entered a cycle of offending behaviours
- Children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation
- Vulnerable young children placed with their parents or have experienced adoption breakdown

Signed:

Date:

Maureen Dennis
(Registered Manager)

Signed:

Date:

Statement of Purpose
Action for Children Fostering Midlands

Stacey Burnett
Operational Director of Children's Services
(Responsible Individual)