



Statement of Purpose

NFA Solihull: Midlands

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Introduction to the Fostering Provider

This Statement of Purpose for National Fostering Agency has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance contained in the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, the Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering 2009, The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 and the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.

This Statement of Purpose is provided to and made available to employees, carers, local authorities, children and young people in placement and to the general public. It is reviewed and agreed annually by the Responsible Individual and Agency Manager.

National Fostering Agency (Midlands) provides a service to Children and Young People across the Midlands Region.

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Registered Manager
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Name and Address of Inspection Body –

Ofsted

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

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General Enquiries

0300 123 1231

About Concerns

0300 123 4666

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Agency Structure

Company Structure

The National Fostering Agency Group provides fostering services across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. The Chief Executive Officer Iain Anderson is the Responsible Individual for all the Registered Offices.

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

National Fostering Agency group is a private Limited Company.

Registered in England, Number 3127814.

National Fostering Agency Midlands is a part of The National Fostering Agency Group and reports to the Board of Directors; Iain Anderson Group Chief Executive, Andrew Isaac Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Isabelle Hutchinson Director of Operations and Commercial, Liz Cowling Director of Quality Assurance, Policy and Training, Suzanne Robson Director of Human Resources

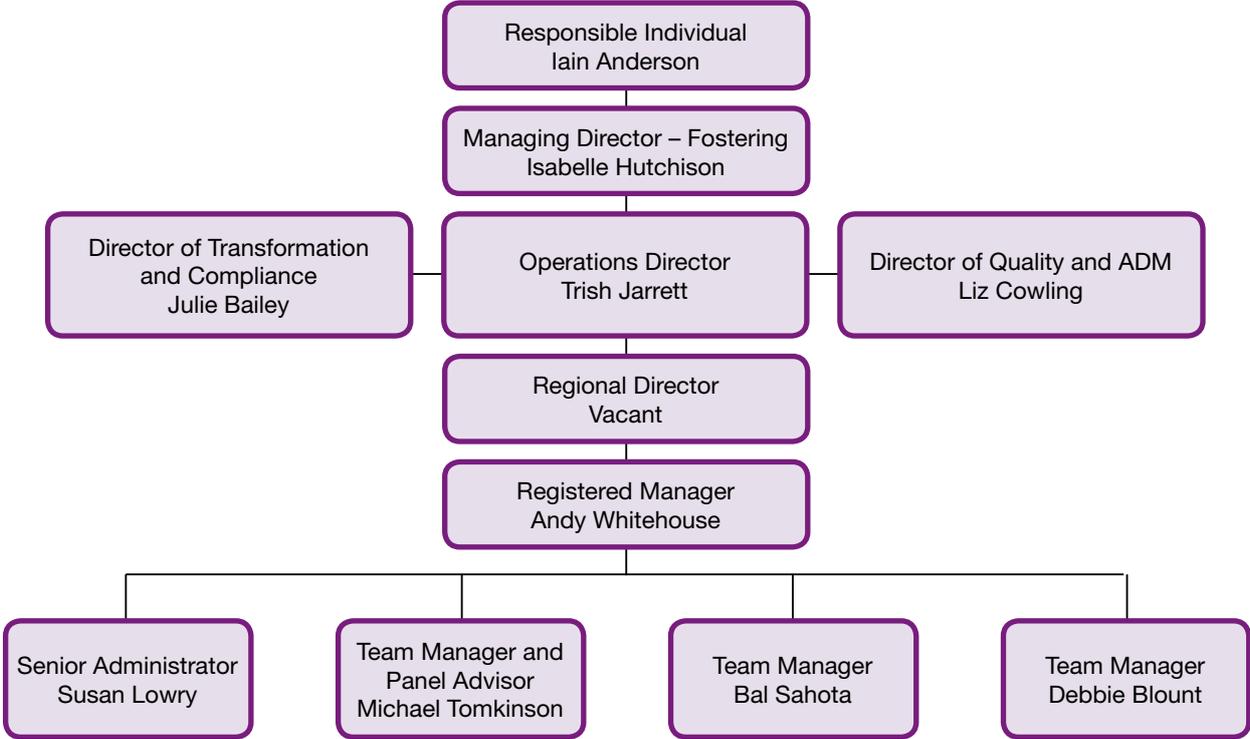
The Agency Manager of National Fostering Agency Midlands meets with the Directors on a monthly basis to discuss developments that have taken place in the agency and look at the progress required of the Annual Business Plan.

Central Support services include Training, Human Resources, Finance, and Quality Assurance Teams who are based in each of the regions and at our Head office in Uxbridge.

The Agency Manager is a member of the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team is responsible for strategic planning for the company including its business plan. When considering the plans for the business staff, foster carers, children's' and families views are taken into consideration.

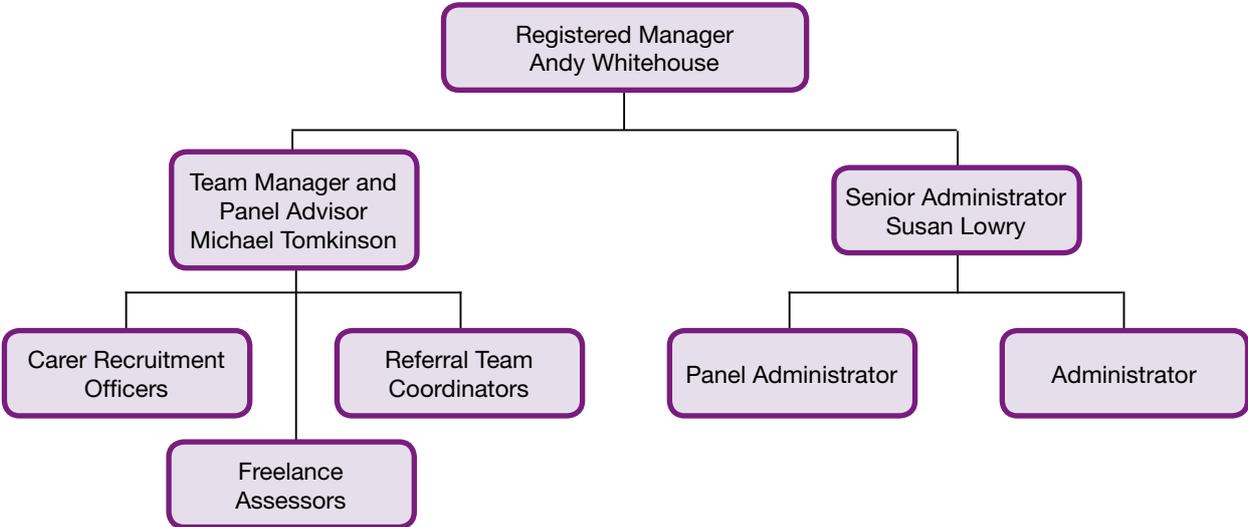
Midlands Team Structure

The National Fostering Agency Midlands senior management team have a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of fostering and social care. The Operations Manager, Registered Manager and Social Work Team Managers all hold management qualifications and are qualified social workers registered with HCPC. The senior management group meet on a monthly basis and are responsible for all strategic and operational aspects of the agency. The Registered Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency and the development of services to foster carers, children and young people. The Agency Manager is a qualified social worker, experienced in Statutory and Voluntary sector as well as inspection and regulation.



Operations Team

All members of the Operations 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. The team meets together on a fortnightly basis to ensure excellent communication and the sharing of ideas to continually develop the services that we provide.

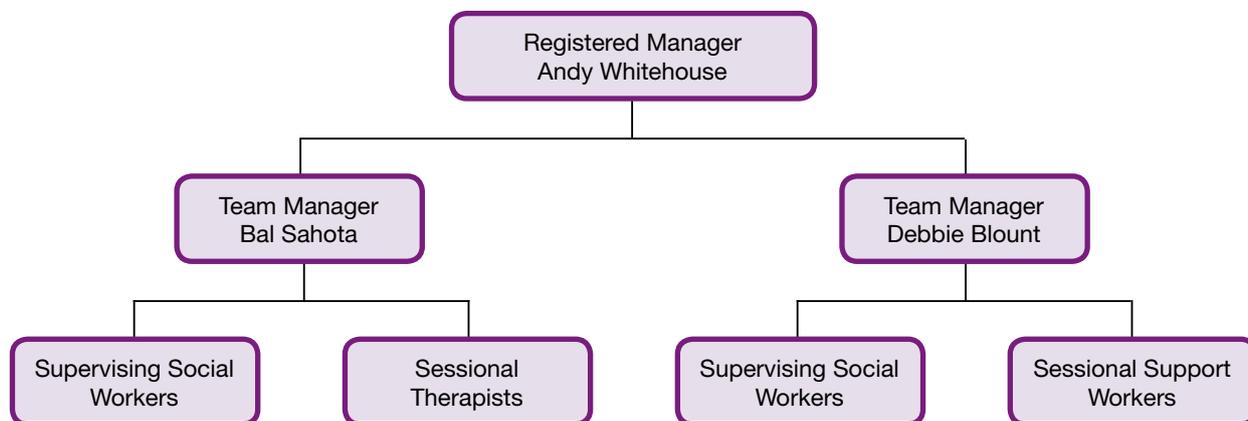


The Social Work Team

Team Managers and Supervising Social Workers are all qualified, HCPC registered and very experienced social workers, having worked in a wide variety of statutory social work settings. The majority of the team have further post qualifying qualifications. They each have a geographical area and are responsible for visiting carer households regularly, attending meetings, spending time with children and young people in placement as appropriate and making recommendations for the annual foster carer review. They each facilitate their own Foster Carer Support groups.

Support Workers provide specific support to foster carers and children, including the independence training package, attendance at PEP meetings, liaising with schools and education provisions to support children in their educational achievements, supporting young people in identifying further education or employment opportunities and group work on specific subjects. Support Workers are experienced in working with children in a range of settings including youth and education. We also use the services of a number of highly qualified therapists and social workers on a regular basis. All members of staff, whether self employed, casual or permanent, are suitably qualified. All permanent members of staff have training development plans specific to their area of expertise, receive monthly supervision and annual appraisals. In addition the social work team also receive reflective practice supervision to reflect on complex practice issues. The National Fostering Agency carries out background checks on all staff employed or commissioned by the company in accordance with requirements of the National Care Standards Act 2000 (National Minimum Fostering Standards).

All staff undertake mandatory training in safeguarding, equality and diversity and data protection.





Vision and Values

VISION:

The vision of the National Fostering Agency is to be “Simply the Best” fostering provider.

Mission Statement

Delivering outstanding services for children and young people through enthusiasm and commitment.

Values

PEOPLE: “RESPECT AND CONSIDERATION IN HOW WE TREAT PEOPLE”

Respect for others and a team commitment to working together to collectively achieve our goals and aspirations.

SERVICE: “PASSION AND INTEGRITY IN WHAT WE DO”

Extraordinary creativity in service delivery and innovation by demonstrating our willingness to explore new approaches to improve the quality of life for children and young people in our care.

QUALITY: “EXCELLENCE AND TRUST IN OUR OUTCOMES”

All that we do meets or exceeds all statutory requirements and aims to achieve excellence through attention to detail and demonstrating best practice.

FINANCE: “ETHICAL AND TRANSPARENT IN WHAT WE CHARGE”

Being open and honest with our customers in being able to demonstrate value for money through our proposition and service offers.

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.

The primary aims and objectives of the agency are:

- 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

Placements Provided

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 and sibling groups. Referrals can be made within our outside office hours.

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 their duration and are often linked to further assessments of the child and other family members, together with court processes. Long term plans can be formulated 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/Permanency

Placements are available with long term foster carers who can take individual children or sibling groups. Long term placements are matched and ratified in conjunction with the responsible local authority.

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.

Single Placements

If the placing authority requires the child to be the only child or youngest/oldest child in placement this would need to be specified at the referral stage to enable the placement to be matched with vacancies accordingly.

Sibling Placements

Many of our foster carers are able to care for large sibling groups which ensures children remain with their brothers and sisters.

Unaccompanied Children and Young People

A number of our foster carers have experience of caring for children who arrive in the UK without a family or guardian.

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 where-by Young People aged 18 and older that were previously looked after remain living with their former foster carers.



The Voice of the Child

Children & Young People's Rights

National Fostering Agency supports UNICEF's mission is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

Participation and Consultation

The Senior Management Team (SMT) within the National Fostering Agency is committed to ensuring the involvement of service users, carers, staff and stakeholders.

Standards of Care

As of November 2016, National Fostering Agency Midlands were looking after 227 children who were unable to live with their birth families for a variety of reasons. The children in placement come from a wide range of backgrounds. To ensure that high quality care is provided to the children and young people National Fostering Agency has established clear guidance for all foster carers and staff in the foster carers' manual. The foster carers manual also outlines the standards that we expect from approved foster carers.

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 bedrooms unless their Local Authority has given permission for them to share (in the case of siblings or holiday accommodation). Children are encouraged to individualise their rooms. A quiet area for study is identified in each home and the provision of a computer and internet access is available for use by each child. All foster homes are assessed for a healthy and safe environment on an annual basis. Play areas are safe, 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.

Health 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 adheres to. Supervising Social Workers regularly check medication documents. 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.

Complaints/Protection

All children placed with National Fostering Agency carers have the right to be safe, protected and listened to. When a child is placed with a foster carer they will be given written and verbal guidance (relative to their understanding) outlining the complaints procedure and ways to access support. This will include help lines, e.g. NSPCC, Childline and the telephone number of Ofsted. As well as statutory visits from the child's social worker, a National Fostering Agency supervising social worker will see the children on their own on a regular basis. National Fostering Agency always aims to give the best possible service but occasionally things can go wrong. When that happens we want to put them right and learn from our mistakes.

National Fostering Agency has a stringent anti-bullying policy. Foster carers are given advice and training on how to recognise signs of bullying and strategies are formulated on how to support the child and ensure they are protected.

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.

Education

National Fostering Agency believe children have the fundamental right to experience an appropriate education which enables them to meet their potential. Our aim is to ensure every child placed with National Fostering Agency has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). This is monitored and reviewed at regular intervals by the child's school, social worker and carer. Carers are expected to be fully involved with this process. Educational goals are important to build a firm foundation of academic and social learning to enable children to progress their academic achievements. Whenever possible children are enrolled at local schools where they have the opportunity to make friends and participate in activities in the local community. Children without school placements will be expected to be provided with teaching hours from the Local Authority they are placed in.

Absconding

All foster carers have access to our policy on children who go missing. If there are issues of risk relating to absconding, vulnerability or Child Sexual Exploitation then a strategy will be agreed in the Placement Agreement/Care Plan to afford appropriate supervisory levels and agreed forms of management. All children who go missing are offered the opportunity of meeting with someone outside the foster home to talk through the reasons for them absconding.

Safeguarding Procedures

National Fostering Agency has safeguarding procedures which staff and foster carers are all familiar with based on Working Together to safeguard children. Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Any special arrangements that need to be considered to ensure that safe care is provided, will be discussed with the placing authority and incorporated into the child's Placement Agreement/Care Plan.



Foster Families

Recruitment

The skills required of foster carers able to deliver to these plans are varied and wide-ranging; this is reflected in the diversity of people who become National Fostering Agency carers. The agency recruits individuals and families from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and from all parts of the community, who can bring a variety of experiences to the fostering task and aid good matching.

Application Process

The National Fostering Agency website provides potential carers with information and real life case examples to help them make informed choices about fostering for this agency. Enquiries can be made online, by telephone or dedicated text. All applicants will be contacted initially by a Carer Recruitment Officer who will discuss:

- Motivation to foster
- Composition of their household
- Working arrangements
- The room available to foster
- The age of prospective carer's own children and the effect fostering may have on the.

Initial Visits

Following the enquiry an initial home visit is completed a member of the team in the prospective carer's home. Accurate and realistic information about the fostering task needs of children in the local area and support provided by the agency is shared. The Social Worker or Carer Recruitment Officer will consider with the potential applicant through discussion their skills and motivation, alongside practical requirements to foster.

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 of Prospective Carers

All assessments are conducted by qualified, registered Social Workers. All candidates must:

- Complete a standard application form
- Give agreement for the required statutory checks to be undertaken.
- Agree to undertake a medical
- Provide the names of three referees
- Provide details of any ex-partners
- Provide details of all children/adult children, of the applicants
- Give their agreement to an employer's reference being obtained

As part of the assessment process applicants are required to attend a 3 day Skills to Foster Training programme which will inform their preparation to foster. During this time they will begin to complete a Training Standards Portfolio which they should complete in their first year of fostering.

In addition evidence based written report covers:

- The applicants motivation to be a foster carer
- Their capabilities and individual skills
- The feelings, views and involvement of all household members, including applicant's children who may live away from the home.
- Any existing demands made on the applicant
- Recommendations in terms of matching alongside the family.

Approval

Once completed the assessment report is presented to National Fostering Agency Midlands independent Panel, which is held at the Solihull office. The Panel is made up of at least six members who have a variety of expertise and knowledge including health and education, being foster carers, or having the experience of being a Looked After Child. The function of the Panel is to provide an independent quality assurance role, considering the approval of applicants and continuation of foster carer's approval. The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker who

makes the final decision to approve. The agency's decision maker is the Director of Quality and Training who is also social work qualified. Following approval the carers are sent a Foster Care Agreement detailing their responsibilities and the commitment from the agency. If the foster carers are unhappy with the final decision they have a right to appeal. This can be made direct to the agency or direct to the Independent Review Mechanism.

Review and Terminations of Approval

The Agency reviews carer approval annually, or following a significant event or change within the household to ensure that the carer continues to be suitable in line with statutory requirements. For all reviews a full report will be prepared by the agency Social Worker with contributions from the Child placed, their family, their Social Worker, any other professionals involved in the child's care and the birth children of the foster carer living at in the foster home.

The review provides an opportunity for the agency and carer to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead. The review recommendation will then be presented to the Agency Decision Maker. The carer will then receive confirmation of their re approval in writing.

Approved Foster Families

As of November 2016, National Fostering Agency Midlands has over 167 foster families approved to care for children and young people aged between 0-18 years. This includes foster carers able to look after sibling groups, parent & child, children with disabilities and children with challenging behaviours.

The agency has foster families residing in:

Coventry
Stoke on Trent
Solihull
Warwickshire
Derby
Nottingham
Northampton
Dudley
Sandwell
Staffordshire
Telford
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Birmingham
Leicester
Worcester
Shropshire



Matching Children with Foster Families

Matching children carefully to foster families is essential and although there are risks to all placements, as an Agency we endeavour to minimise these by gaining a full picture of the child's needs and sharing all this information with the potential foster carers. National Fostering Agency considers all the factors in terms of the child's individual needs and wishes, location, education and contact plans to ensure that families can provide the necessary support that is required.

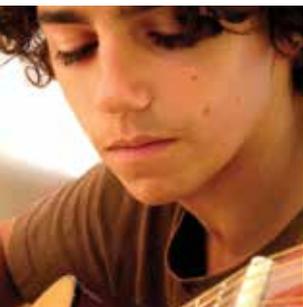
Referral and Matching Process

The agency has a dedicated Team Manager and two referral coordinators who are available to receive referrals from local authorities during the normal office hours. The team establishes as much information as possible regarding the child/young person's circumstances then works closely with the social work team to consider any potential matches with foster families. The issues which are considered during the Matching Process are;

- Foster carer's abilities to meet children's needs
- Foster carers approval
- Other family members or existing foster children
- Foster carers skills, knowledge and ability to meet the child's needs
- The proposed length of time and the tasks required are compatible with the Carers' experience.
- Any risks that have been identified have a management plan that the Foster carers can implement
- 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 the child is identified as having specific health needs consideration will be given as to whether specialist health resources are available within reasonable travelling distances of the foster carer's home.

Foster carers are provided with all information made available to the agency in order for them to decide whether they can meet the child's needs and the care plan. Carers are fully involved in the matching process and they will ultimately make the final decision as to whether they can offer the child or young person a placement in their foster home. Information on all National Fostering Agency foster carers is made available to local authorities in the form of a family book, together with a copy of their BAAF Form F assessment.

The National Fostering Agency also offers an emergency placement service outside of normal working hours. Referrals are accepted by one of our Supervising Social Work Team who will review the needs and circumstances of the child and match these alongside one of our emergency foster carers.



Support Provided to Children and Young People

When the Local Authority and the agency have agreed that an identified foster carer can meet the needs of a child, a placement contract is made agreeing the duration 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 the opportunity to meet and create a Foster Placement Agreement/Care Plan. It is expected that the Social Worker will bring LAC documentation to the meeting. We will consider emergency/same day placements, but only where the placement would promote the young person's welfare. All children and young people in placement with National Fostering Agency carers will receive ongoing support from their Local Authority Social Worker. In addition to this support they will also have the opportunity to meet with the Supervising Social Worker to discuss any concerns or let them know what is going well.

Services available for children include:

- Support to find or pursue a hobby or interest
- Individual or group work, including structured activities for children out of school
- Social activities for the sons and daughters of foster carers
- Access to national organisations for looked after children and young people
- Supervised or unsupervised contact with families as determined by the Local Authority
- Life story or permanency preparation
- Education & Therapeutic professionals to provide assistance directly to children or advice to our social workers

Education

At National Fostering Agency we believe that all children have the right to experience an appropriate education which enables them to meet their potential. Additional support to children is provided to children who are at risk of exclusion to maintain their place in education or identify a more appropriate education provision that meets their needs.

Health

At National Fostering Agency we recognise that often the reason children and young people need to be looked after is that their health and development have been neglected in some way, consequently they have many health needs which need to be addressed. Changes and moves often mean that looked after children and young people's health care can be disrupted. All our foster carers understand the importance of ensuring that all health needs of the children they care for are met from ensuring they have received their immunisations to overseeing and promoting their general health and well-being. Foster carers and Supervising Social Workers understand that the overall physical, emotional, mental and sexual well-being of a child or young person need to be considered at regular intervals and all health checks completed. All carers attend a First Aid training course as part of the agency's comprehensive training programme.

Therapy

We believe that children 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 access local provision where possible. If children cannot access local provision due to the time-scales involved or the complexity of their situation, we are able to provide appropriate therapeutic services through a number of fully qualified professionals who have extensive and appropriate experience.

Events

Every school holiday we hold activity days for our looked after children, foster carers and their birth children. This provides an opportunity for all the staff to meet with the carers and children in an informal setting and have some fun. Whilst having fun we also use this as an opportunity to see the carers with the children, talk to the children about how things are going for them and to see the progress that they are making. In August 2016 we arranged a trip for 340 carers, foster children and birth children to Drayton Manor Theme Park we had an adventure packed day for all the families and staff. The young people, and some carers, especially

enjoyed the rides. As well as having fun it also allows the children and young people to meet others who are either placed with foster carers or are the sons and daughters of foster carers. This provides an opportunity for them to build new friendships in a relaxed enjoyable atmosphere.



Support Provided to Foster Families

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

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.

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.

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.

We can provide additional services and support to meet the needs of children in placement, foster carers and Local Authorities.

The resources available are:

- Respite (of varying duration)
- Day care
- Babysitting
- Structured activities
- Contact between child and relatives

Training

The National Fostering Agency is committed to providing the highest quality of training to enable foster carers and staff to be confident and competent in carrying out the tasks asked of them. The protection and welfare of the children placed with our carers is our priority. This is reflected in our training programme for foster carers. The National Fostering Agency considers that placement stability is crucial to the needs of children and incorporates the Secure Base model into our training.

We currently provide the following:

Pre-Approval

- Skills to Foster covering: Child Protection, Safe Caring, Child Care Law, LAC Documentation, Anti-discriminatory Practice, Promoting Contact and Recording.
- Safeguarding children and young people.

Post Approval Core Training Year 1

- Training, Support and Development Standard (TSDS)
- First Aid
- Safer Caring
- Attachment and Understanding Behaviour
- Working with Other Professionals and Families

Post Approval

- Recovery Needs of Children Who Have Been Abused
- Child Protection
- Managing Difficult Behaviour
- Communicating with Children
- Attachment Theory
- First Aid (every 3 years)
- Safer Caring
- Drugs and Alcohol Abuse
- Diversity
- Education Attainment
- Men in Fostering
- Preparing Children for Permanence
- Loss, Separation and Bereavement

In response to foster carers feedback our training programme comprises of face to face training events, workshops and on line modules. This ensures that all of our foster carers have a wide range of opportunities available to suit their preferred learning style.

Events

At National Fostering Agency we have regular coffee mornings and support groups for carers to meet up with each other, and staff. We also use these as an opportunity to fundraise and this year we joined in with the Macmillan Cancer coffee morning. Raising monies to support the charity through a raffle and selling cakes. Christmas lunches and evening celebrations are held each year with over 150 foster carers and staff attending. We also hold smaller informal lunches or social events throughout the year to enhance the carer and staff relationships.

Support Groups

Foster Carer support meetings are held in each of the geographical areas. This allows foster carers to meet and socialise together; share good practice ideas, develop peer support and receive information from the agency. The meetings are attended and organised by the Supervising Social Worker for the area. The groups include guest speakers and training sessions as well as an informal lunch and catch up.

Emergency Support

National Fostering Agency provides a 24/7, 365 days a year on-call service to foster carers staffed by an National Fostering Agency Supervising Social Worker who has access to a senior manager.

Annual Review

All foster carers have an annual review to ensure that they continue to be suitable to be approved as foster carers. The annual review ensures all statutory requirements are fulfilled and that foster carers have the opportunity to reflect and evaluate on their practice and development and to set new objectives and action plans for the coming year. The annual review is overseen by the Team Managers and Regional Manager.

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.

FosterTalk Membership

Once approved, foster carers automatically become members of FosterTalk. FosterTalk is able to provide carers and their families with advice and guidance including financial and legal advice.

- Legal expenses insurance cover
- 24 Hour legal advice service
- Accountancy advice
- Counseling helpline
- General advice and support
- Education advisory service
- Advice on personal finances
- Medical first aid helpline
- Arrest interview assistance cover
- Website communication, including a foster carer's forum
- Quarterly magazines
- Range of discounts

Finance

All foster carers receive an allowance paid every week during placement. The level of this allowance is dependent on the type of placement and experience of the foster carer. In addition foster carers are also paid a holiday allowance equivalent to two weeks foster allowance.

Insurance

The National Fostering Agency has an insurance package which is fully comprehensive and covers all the agency's activities. It is based on Fostering Network standards and covers both carers and the agency, as follows:

- Personal and Public Liabilities (indemnity limit £5 million)
- Employer's Liability Insurance (indemnity limit of £10 million)
- Professional Indemnity (indemnity limit £5 million)
- Abuse & Molestation (indemnity limit of £5 million)

- Foster Carer's Public Liability, All Risks, Thefts and Malicious Damage insurance whilst a child is in placement, excluding damage to motor vehicles and property already insured (limit £100,000 for one occurrence)
- Medical Malpractice (indemnity limit of £5 million)

The Foster Carer's insurance is provided by Markel UK Limited Insurance Group via D E Ford Insurance Brokers. Premiums are paid by the agency although carers are required to have their own household contents insurance and are advised about the information they need to pass on to their insurers about their carer role.



National Fostering Agency as a Learning Environment

A commitment to learning and development at all levels of the agency is demonstrated through:

- Carers completing personal development plans which identify their future learning needs. This is used to direct them to the range of face to face courses provided throughout the year, elearning courses, and specialist courses if required. Carers are also encouraged to take advantage of courses offered by the local authority whose children are placed with them. They also have access to seminars delivered by Supervising Social Workers at support groups or on a one to one basis
- Staff complete their learning and development plans as part of their annual appraisals. Individual learning needs are tailored toward career development alongside development of 'areas of special interest' which add value to the local service delivered and provide Regional teams with 'champions'. This informs the regional management team of what training needs to be commissioned. Staff also have access to a wide range of elearning courses. Staff are encouraged to undertake training offered by local safeguarding boards in the locality where they are working. Team managers benefit from a blended learning programme called Aspire, Achieve, Advance – developing our team managers to meet our future challenges. Managers are also given the opportunity to achieve an ILM in management
- National Fostering Agency welcomes the placement of students in its regions. Supervising Social Workers are supported to undertake training in becoming Practice Teachers. Teams support students by offering them a wide range of learning experiences
- National Fostering Agency has made a commitment to support and supervise AYSE workers in their first year of practice to complete their portfolio where the region can accommodate them. Their supervisors and AYSE workers share experiences and learning through a support group



Finance

A statement of the agency's financial position:

The agency's income is generated entirely by fees paid by the local authorities for placements with agency carers for looked after children. These fees are detailed in the agency's Schedule of Fees.

The agency's expenditure comprises fees to foster carers, staff salaries and the expenses associated with the running of the service. There is also a commitment to improving and enhancing services to carers and children. The agency's finances are subject to annual audits.



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 (Southern England)

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.



Contact Details

Essential Addresses and Contact Details

Children's Commissioner

Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner
Office of Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

T: 020 7783 8330

E: Info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Freephone for children and young people

T: 0800 5288330

Voice

Voice is a national children's charity that empowers children and young people in care and in need and campaigns for change to improve their lives.

320 City Road

London

EC1V 2NZ

T: 020 7833 5792

www.voiceyp.org

E: info@voiceyp.org

Ofsted

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

Regulatory Inspector

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

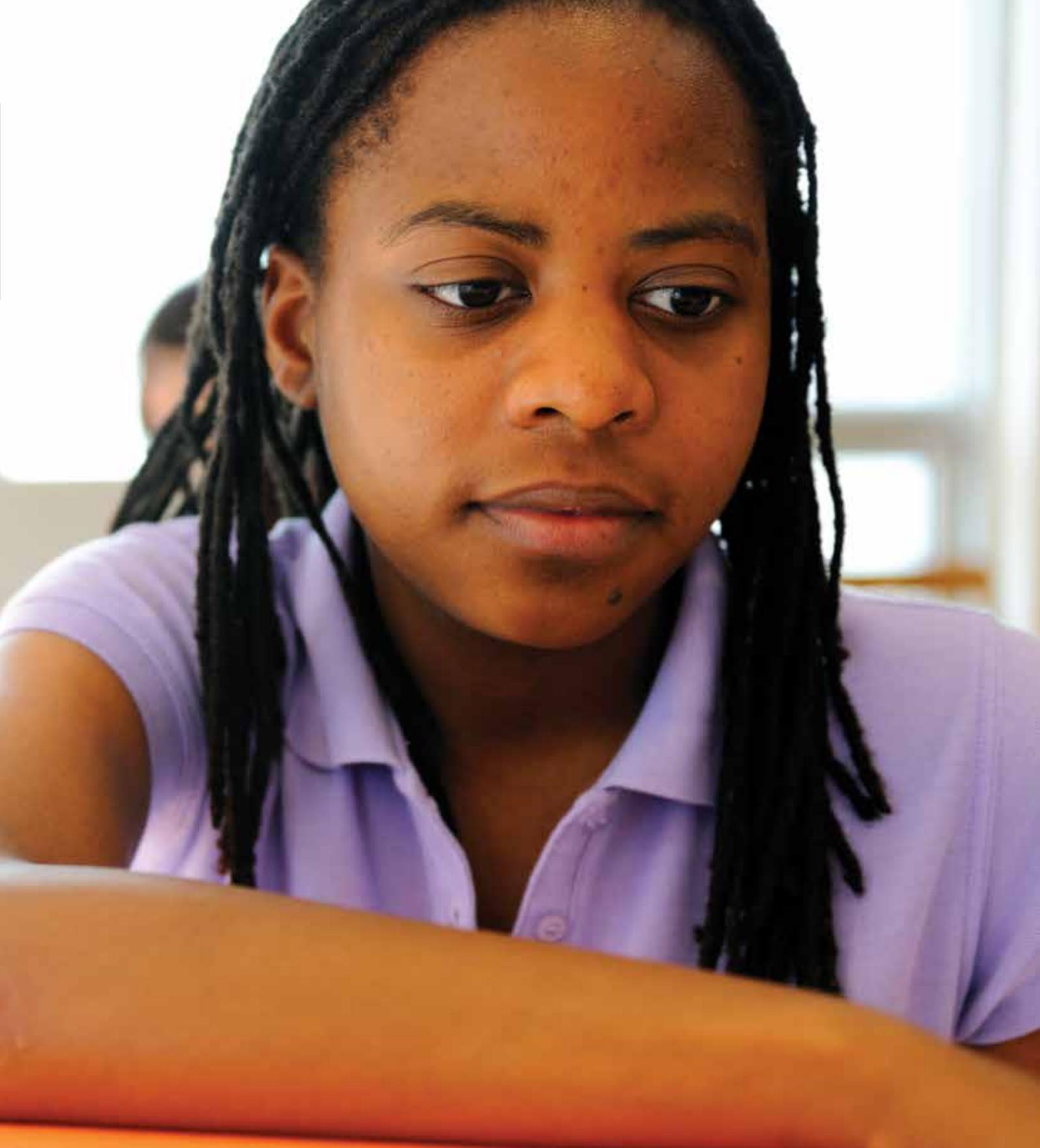
Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



By providing carefully matched, and professionally trained and supported foster carers, the National Fostering Agency provides each individual child placed with a responsive, effective and quality service.



NFA Solihull: Midlands

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