

Statement of Purpose

January 2024



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Introduction

This statement of purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance including:

- The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 2004.
- The Care Standards Act 2000.
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 (+2013, +2015).

The statement of purpose, produced in accordance with Fostering Services

Regulation three, includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of Active Care Solutions (ACS) fostering service.
- A statement as to the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.

A copy of this statement of purpose is available on our website and copies will be made available, upon request, to:

- Any person working for ACS.
- Any foster parent or prospective foster parent.
- Any child or young person placed with ACS.
- The parent/person with parental responsibility for a child or young person placed with ACS.
- Local authorities who place or are considering placing children and young people with ACS foster parents.
- Colleagues in children's social care.
- General public.

This statement of purpose will be reviewed and updated annually by the ACS board of directors.

About ACS

ACS is an independent fostering agency that is part of the Polaris Community. It is registered as an independent fostering agency under provision of the Care Standards Act 2000 and regulated by Ofsted.

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ACS was set up largely in response to a growing need for a prompt co-ordinated service which provides bespoke packages of care to meet the needs of individual children and young people, especially children from faith communities and ethnic minorities. As well as meeting the needs of children, young people and foster parents from the wider community, ACS has developed a service that also engages and supports the ever growing need for foster parents from all black minority and ethnic group communities and multi-faith backgrounds.

ACS – Part of the Polaris Community

Polaris is one of the UK's largest leading communities of children's service providers. Within the community, we have independent fostering and adoption agencies who have been passionately improving the lives of young people for over 30 years, as well as Leaving Care services, Education and bespoke children's services contracts. Our nurturing community works collectively to support the very best outcomes for each and every child in our care. We're ambitious for our children and young people, families and staff, and believe in their futures.

Our Mission, Vision and Values:

- At Polaris we have one ambition across our community – to transform the future of children and children's services.

“At the very heart of our Polaris Community is a common aim where everyone is committed to enabling everychild and young person in our care to reach their full potential. We are ambitious for ourselves and our children. I am exceptionally proud that I am surrounded by an inspirational team of staff and families who are completely committed to making a difference and to achieve the best outcomes for children across the UK. I am exceptionally proud that I am surrounded by an inspirational team of staff and families who are completely committed to making a difference and to achieve the best outcomes for children across the UK.”

Jo August, Chief Executive Officer

We aim to:

Provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment to young people in our care. We believe that young people should be provided with opportunities to achieve their full potential and to live fulfilling lives in the community.

Objectives:

- To recruit a sufficient pool of high quality foster parents from multi-faith and BAME communities to offer local authorities appropriate choices/matches to meet the identified needs of the ever increasing numbers of children and young people coming into the care system from these communities.
- To recruit, assess, train and prepare a diverse range of foster parents to meet the identified needs of children and young people referred to us, including; children and young people with disabilities, complex behaviours, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, residential migration and parent and child placements.
- To provide local authorities with bespoke packages of care that meet the individual needs of the child or young person.
- To retain foster carers through effective training, support and supervision and in turn provide placement stability for children and young people.
- To ensure staff are trained and equipped to deliver high quality and timely services within the context of National Minimum Standards and Regulatory frameworks.





Services provided

ACS offers a wide range of placements for children and young people of all ages with approved foster parents. All placements are appropriately and professionally matched ensuring a detailed process between the needs of the children and young people and the skills, competence and experience of foster parents to meet those needs.

We provide a wide range of placements for children and young people of all ages and needs, these include:

- Long term placements.
- Short term placements.
- Emergency placements.
- Bridging placements.
- Short break care placements.
- Solo placements.
- Parent and child placements.
- Asylum seeker placements.

- Sibling group placements.
- Assessment placements.
- Placements for children who are disabled.
- Step down from residential placements.

All placements made with our foster parents are undertaken and monitored in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (+2013).

This means that:

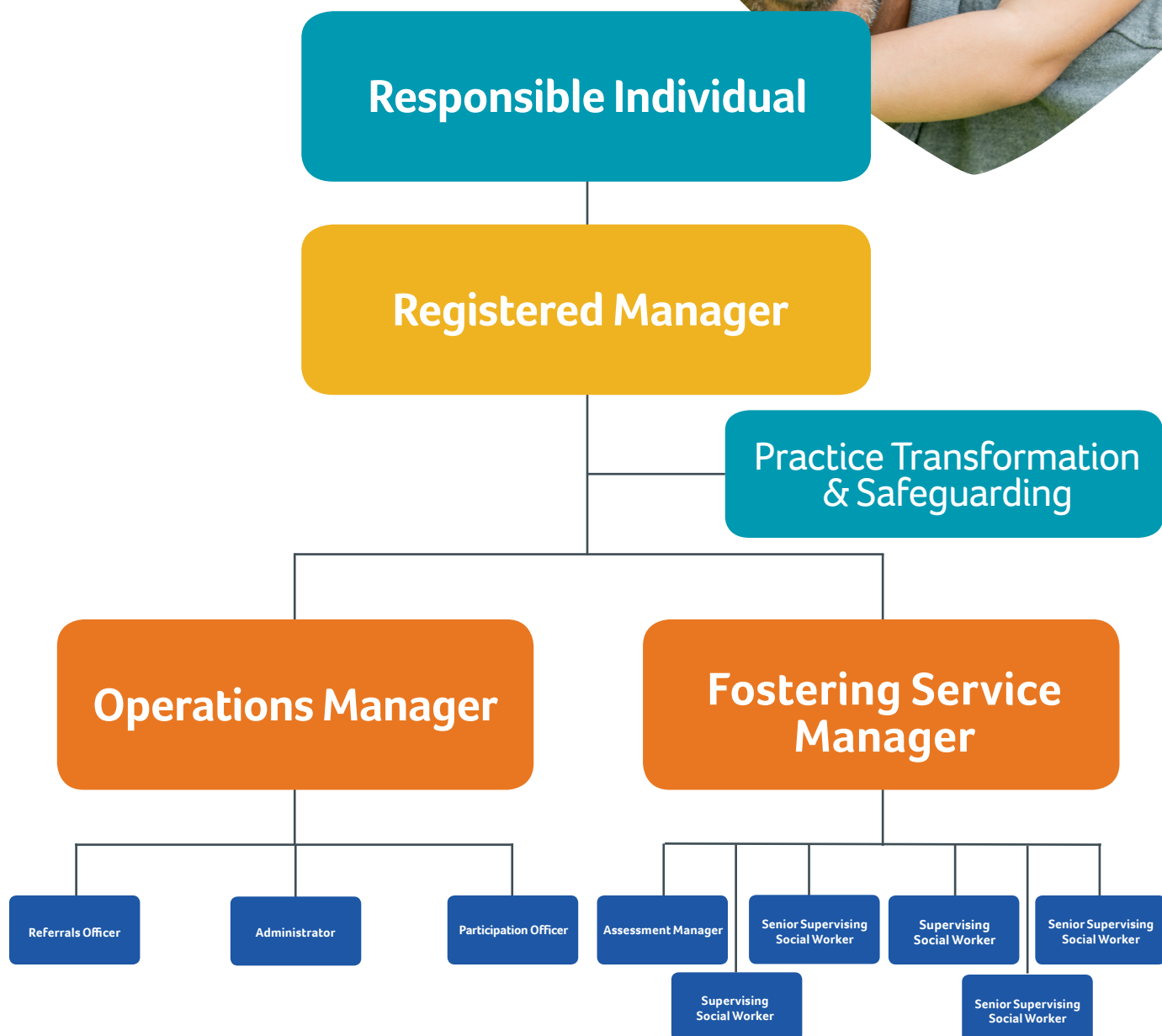
All foster parents are properly approved, reviewed and have signed a Foster Care Agreement.

All children's placements are made using individual

Foster Placement Agreements which are prepared either before or at the point of placement and which include essential information sharing and information about the placement plan.

Wherever possible pre-placement planning is undertaken, including introductions between

Organisational structure



Recruitment, assessment and approval of foster parents

ACS are committed to the recruitment of foster parents who can meet the needs of children and young people, through the provision of high quality care. All potential foster parents who make an enquiry are subject to the following process:

- On receiving an enquiry from a potential foster parent, an ACS representative from the recruitment centre will contact the prospective foster parent and request basic information before forwarding literature, giving details about the work of the agency and the recruitment process.
- If a potential foster parent wishes to proceed after receiving the literature, they are requested to contact the agency and an initial home visit with an ACS fostering representative will be arranged. At this point the ACS representative will answer any questions and queries that potential foster parents may have and they will conduct a basic health and safety audit on the potential foster parent's home.
- If the decision to proceed is made following the initial home visit, the potential foster parent is asked to complete an application form, giving detailed information about them and their family and consent for ACS to complete necessary checks and enquiries to ascertain their suitability to foster.

Details of the statutory checks that are required to be undertaken are contained within the application pack and include criminal record checks for all adult members of the household, medical checks, and local authority/employment checks.

In addition to the statutory checks that are required to be undertaken the potential foster parent is required to provide details of at least three personal referees who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process.

We aim to conclude the assessment process with four to six months from the date of application. During this period the potential foster parent will be allocated a qualified social worker who will visit the applicants within their home for approximately six to eight occasions to collect information



about all members of the household and the applicant's experience and skills in relation to fostering.

The information obtained from the home assessment will form the basis of the Form F Assessment Report. In addition to the home assessment all applicants are required to attend mandatory preparation training. This training is generally held over a period of three days and consists of six modules that the potential foster parent must complete. This training provides potential foster parents with evidence for TSD training standards workbook and incorporates such areas as the responsibilities of being a foster parent, understanding children and young people's experiences and behaviours, working in partnership with other agencies, safer caring principles and dealing with allegations.

The content of the Form F assessment, including feedback from the preparation training, is shared with the applicants and they are invited to make their comments before the presentation of all required paperwork and evidence to the fostering panel.

Based on the information presented to them, the fostering panel will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster parents with ACS. The fostering panel's independent recommendation is then presented to ACS agency decision maker (ADM) who will make a decision about approval based on all of the information presented.

In line with the National Minimum Standards for fostering the ADM will make the decision within seven working days of receiving the panel recommendation and final panel minutes and this decision is then communicated orally to the potential foster parents within two working days and confirmed in writing within five working days. When receiving the ADM's decision, the applicants are also informed of their right to appeal this decision via the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

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Support to foster parents and children in placement

ACS offers a comprehensive package to ensure that foster parents are fully supported and placements are successful. This includes:

- 1. Access** to a member of staff 24 hours a day, seven days per week, 365 days of the year.
- 2. Supervision** and support from a qualified and suitably experienced ACS supervising social worker who visits at a minimum of once a month whenever any child is in placement (support visits are increased in line with the needs of any given placement) and maintains regular telephone contact.
- 3. Short break care** and/or holiday contributions for children and young people.
- 4. Support for foster parents** including a comprehensive package to ensure that foster parents are fully supported and placements are successful. This includes an allocated ACS social worker, who visits at least monthly whenever a child is in placement, and 24 hour access to an 'Out of Hours' duty social worker. Additional support from the ACS children and young people's support worker who has care experience would be available as and when required.
- 5. A comprehensive** foster parents' handbook.
- 6. Membership of Foster Talk** helpline and specialist independent support scheme.
- 7. A comprehensive post-approval training programme** including access to Level Three Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce. Pre-approval training is provided for all prospective foster parents and is a crucial element of the foster parent recruitment process.

Post-approval training is provided by ACS utilising a mix of 'in-house' and external training providers. All ACS foster parents are expected to complete the training, support and development standards for foster parents within the first year of their approval and follow a training programme which is clearly linked to:
 - The national minimum standards for fostering which focus upon securing and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
 - The competencies identified within the NVQ in England Level 3 Diploma in Caring for Children & Young People.
 - Key findings from research, government guidance and examples of best practice.
- 8. A level of financial support** that values the skills of foster parents.

All placements of children with ACS foster parents will result from careful initial 'matching' undertaken by ACS staff in consultation with the local authority staff that refer the children. All placements are monitored continuously by ACS supervising social workers together with local authority colleagues, and such other professional staff as may be involved. Careful attention is given to the individual health, developmental and educational needs of children and therapy, education and resource support may be accessed depending on the needs of children in placement and consultation with their responsible authorities.

Representation and complaints procedure

All users of the agency will be advised of their right to make a complaint or representation about the services they have received. They will be issued with the ACS Complaints and Representation leaflet. Children and young people are issued with information about their right to complain within the agency's Complaints' Guide for Children and Young People.

Stage 1: Informal complaints

These are referred to the fostering service manager. We will meet with the complainant with a view of resolving their complaint with an informal and problem solving approach. Informal complaints are responded to within 10 or (by agreement with the complainant) a maximum of 20 working days of the complaint being made and an outcome letter sent to the complainant. The complainant is informed of their right to make a formal complaint if they are dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1.

Stage 2: Formal complaints – independent investigation

When a formal complaint is received these are referred to Core Assets' complaints manager who will co-ordinate an independent investigation. Stage 2 investigations are usually completed within 20 working days of meeting the complainant (the complainant will be kept informed if the investigation is likely to exceed these timescales). The complaints manager will inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation at stage 2 and their right of appeal.

Stage 3: Appeal stage – complaints review panel

The complaints review panel consists of an executive director from the agency, another senior manager who has no connection with the complaint, and a relevant independent person. The independent investigators report will be provided to panel members along with any other supporting documents. The complainant will be invited to attend panel to make their representations. Panel will make an initial response to the complainant within 24 hours and provide a written response within five working days together with information about Ofsted if they remain dissatisfied.

Complainants are also entitled to submit a complaint to Ofsted:

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



0300 123 1231



enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



Useful contact details

ACS Central Services

Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road,
Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 4AD.

T: 01527 556 480

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

T: 020 7783 8330

W: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/contact-us

Regulatory Body

Office for Standards in Education,
Childrens Services and Skills
(Ofsted), Piccadilly Gate, Store
Street, Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk



**“Where embracing
diversity is our success.”**

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