

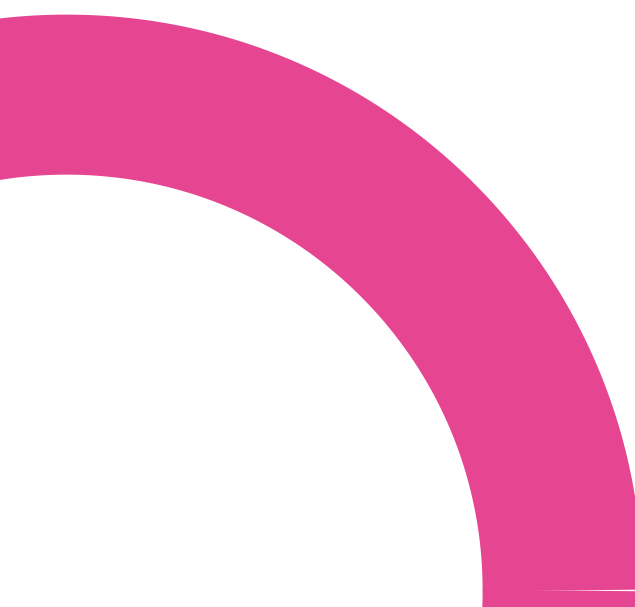


# Statement of Purpose

Fostering Solutions - Wales

July 2023

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# Introduction

This Statement of Purpose is for:-

## **FOSTERING SOLUTIONS WALES**

This document has been developed and produced to meet the requirements of the following legislation and guidance:

- The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering (Wales) Regulations 2010
- Protecting Children Supporting Foster Carers – Dealing with Allegations against Foster Carers Protocol (Guidance, 2011)
- Delegated Authority for Foster Carers (Guidance, 2011)
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Welsh Language Standards (No 1) Regulations 2015 (implementation April 2016)
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
- The Regulated Services (Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2017
- The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018
- The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019
- Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services April 2019
- Disability and Equality Act 2010

A hard copy can be provided if requested. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and agreed annually by the Fostering Manager and the Senior Management Team. A copy of The Statement of Purpose can be provided in Welsh upon request.

## **Responsible Individual - Lynn Webb**

### **Fostering Manager - Julie Grant**

This Statement of Purpose has been produced to provide information to all interested parties, including:

- Welsh Ministers at Care Inspectorate Wales
- Any child placed by Fostering Solutions North Wales, if appropriate.
- The parents of children placed.
- Foster carers and prospective foster carers.
- People working for Fostering Solutions North Wales (employees or self-employed).
- The placing local authority, partner agencies and relevant stakeholders.



# Company Status

The Statement of Purpose for Fostering Solutions North Wales, has been produced in line with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) and has followed the guidance and template from CIW.

The service provider is Fostering Solutions Limited and the registered address of the service is Atria, Spa Road, Bolton, BL1 4AG.

The Responsible Individual is Lynn Webb and the Fostering Manger is Julie Grant.

The address of the service is Clwyd House, 57 Regent Street, Wrexham LL11 1PF and the main line telephone number is 01978 311 590. The office is open between 9am and 5pm on working days.

Fostering Solutions has been established in North Wales since 2003, with the Wrexham office opening in 2006 at the same site we occupy today. The office is located on the main route into the town centre adjacent to Wrexham General train station enabling easy access to the office location by both road and rail. Whilst the office is located on the first floor and has no disabled access we do source alternative venues for those who need disabled access or have difficulty using the stairs. We have used the ground floor meeting rooms for the occasional Panel Meeting when required and we also can access local hotel venues and community halls for training and events as the need arises. The office is leased and not owned.

## Senior Management Team (SMT) Objectives

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

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

The Fostering Manager meets with the Responsible Individual on a monthly basis to discuss the performance and quality of the agency and review the business objectives in line with the agency's annual development and business plans.

Central support services within the National Fostering Group include: Human Resources, Finance, Training, Quality Assurance, Compliance, Fostering Enquiry Centre & National Assessment Service, and contribute to the effective operations of the agency on a day to day basis.

The Agency is able to provide fostering services across the North Wales region and we work in close partnership with all six local authorities in North Wales as well as Mid and South Wales and with authorities in England.



# Aims and Objectives

## “Putting children at the heart of everything we do”

### Aims and Objectives

We strive to deliver high standards of quality care and the best possible outcomes for the children and young people placed with us.

The agency is committed to the delivery of a service that exceeds the standards of care compatible with statutory and regulatory requirements. The agency is inspected by CIW and copies of inspection reports are available via the Fostering Solutions website. In addition, a number of the local authorities that we work with carry out checks to ensure we are meeting our mutual contractual requirements and obligations.

We also receive monitoring visits from the Commissioning Consortium representing all 22 local authorities in Wales.

#### Primary aims:

- To provide a high-quality service and the best possible outcomes for fostered children and young people of all ages, whose needs have been assessed by the Responsible Local Authority as being best met by them living with a foster family
- To ensure fostered children are only placed with foster parents who have been recruited, assessed, approved and reviewed in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance
- To support, supervise, and provide on-going training to parents to enable them to meet the individual needs of the fostered children placed with them
- To continually strive to develop and improve our services through evaluation and feedback on our work

#### Objectives:

- To ensure the provision of the highest possible quality care and outcomes to fostered children in a physically safe and emotionally secure family home
- To meet the fostered child's individual needs and enable the best possible outcomes, in accordance with their care plan
- To have 24-hour support for foster parents and fostered children 365 days a year

- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of fostered children's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully their gender, sexuality and any disability they may have
- To develop the fostered child's sense of identity and self-worth
- To promote the fostered child's health and wellbeing, including their physical, mental and emotional welfare
- To promote the fostered child's educational attendance, achievement, attainment, with the aim of their potential being reached
- To promote and support the fostered child's important relationships, to include agreed contact with their family and friends, in accordance with their care plan
- To prepare fostered children for age appropriate independence
- To seek the views, wishes, opinions, and aspirations, of fostered children and to promote participation alongside, their families and foster parents
- To facilitate learning opportunities to foster parents that enables them to develop their skills, knowledge, and understanding to better meet the needs of the fostered children they are caring for
- To offer foster placements that carefully consider and match the needs of the fostered child to the foster parent's skills and experience
- To support the stability of foster placements and minimising the damaging effects of unplanned endings for fostered children and foster families
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of staff, managers and foster panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes
- To monitor and review agency policies, procedures and practice on a regular basis
- To use experience, best practice, and research to inform practice



# Commitment to Equality and Diversity

At **Fostering Solutions Wales**, we recognise the diverse society and communities in which we all live and work. We embrace and celebrate diversity, respect difference and promote equality of opportunity. We aim to recruit staff and carers from all backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the region in which we operate, and to meet the diverse needs of the fostered children we care for.

We are aware that discrimination, prejudice, unfairness and oppression can exist in every aspect of daily living, including education, employment, health and social care.

We are committed to enabling all fostered children, foster parents and their children, and employees to reach their full potential as individuals, unimpeded by discrimination, unfairness or oppressive behaviour within the organisation.

At **Fostering Solutions Wales**, we want all fostered children in our care, our foster carers and employees to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure our values are embedded in our day to day working practices with all our stakeholders and service user groups.

### The Active Offer

The agency currently has a number of Welsh speaking foster carers. All first language Welsh speaking children are matched to Welsh speaking foster carers. We currently have staff members who are Welsh learners.

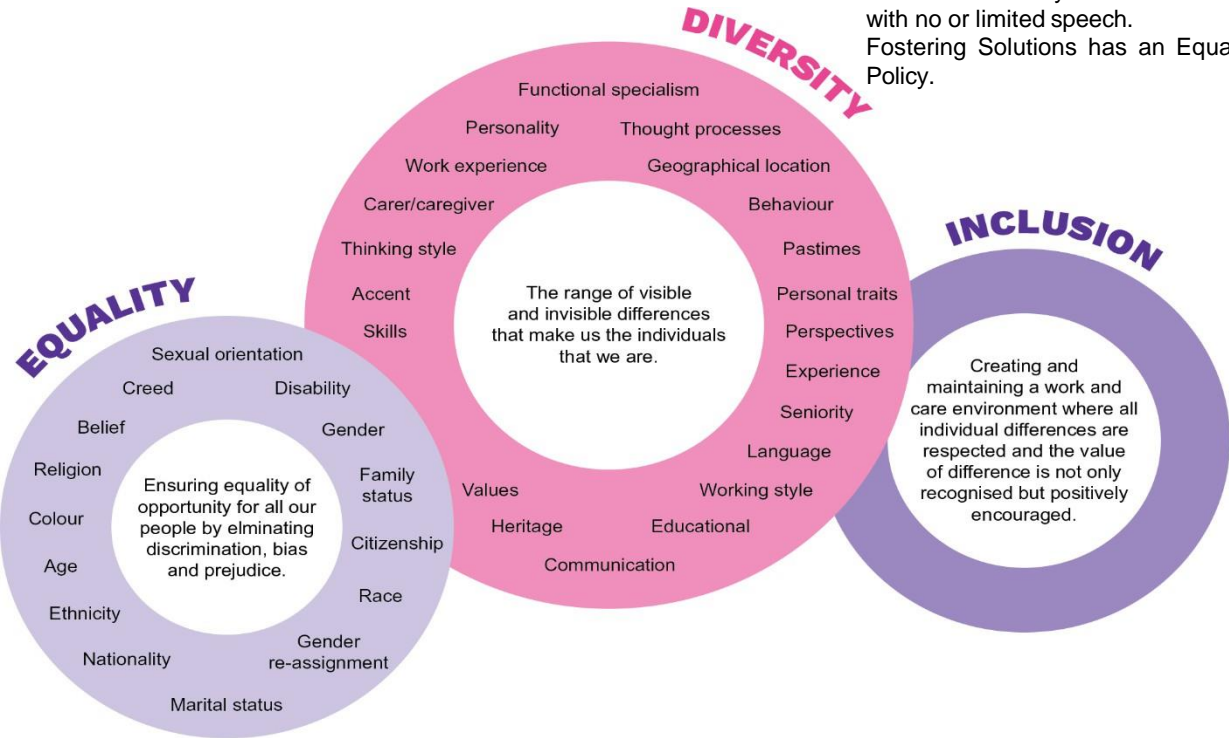
We are able to provide a copy of the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guides in Welsh upon request.

We are currently recruiting Welsh speaking staff for the positions of social worker and panel members. We are sensitive to the needs of Welsh speakers in all aspects of our service and we enquire with all who come into contact with the service if they require translation services to be provided or they can speak to one of our Welsh Speaking staff within the NFA group.

Where possible, all service staff, answer the telephone in Welsh and English, write greetings in both languages and leave voicemail messages in Welsh and English. All cards to foster carers for birthdays, Christmas and cards of thanks are written in both languages.

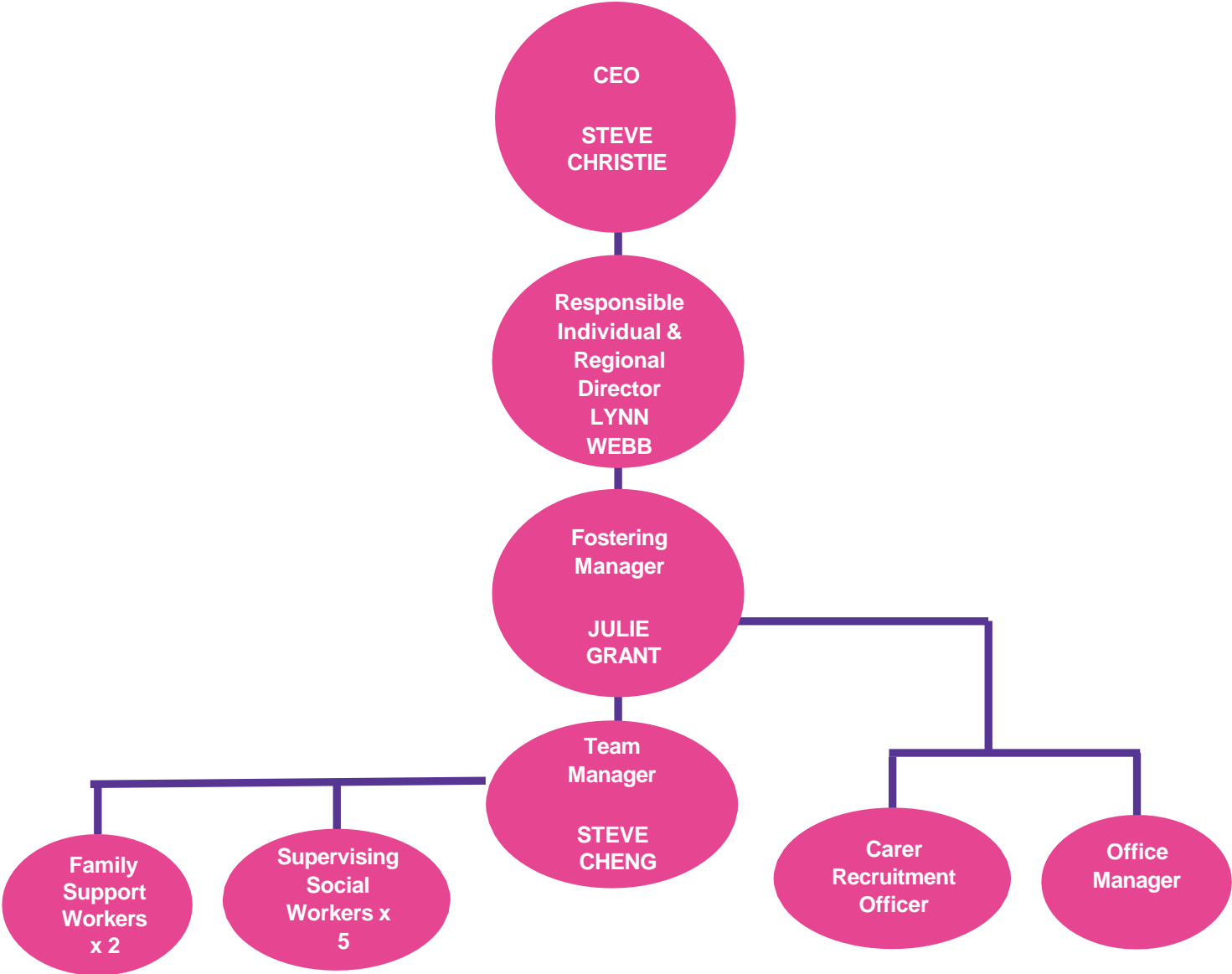
We currently have a number of foster carers who are trained to use Makaton with children who have speech and language difficulties as well as PECS communication systems used to support children with no or limited speech.

Fostering Solutions has an Equality Opportunities Policy.



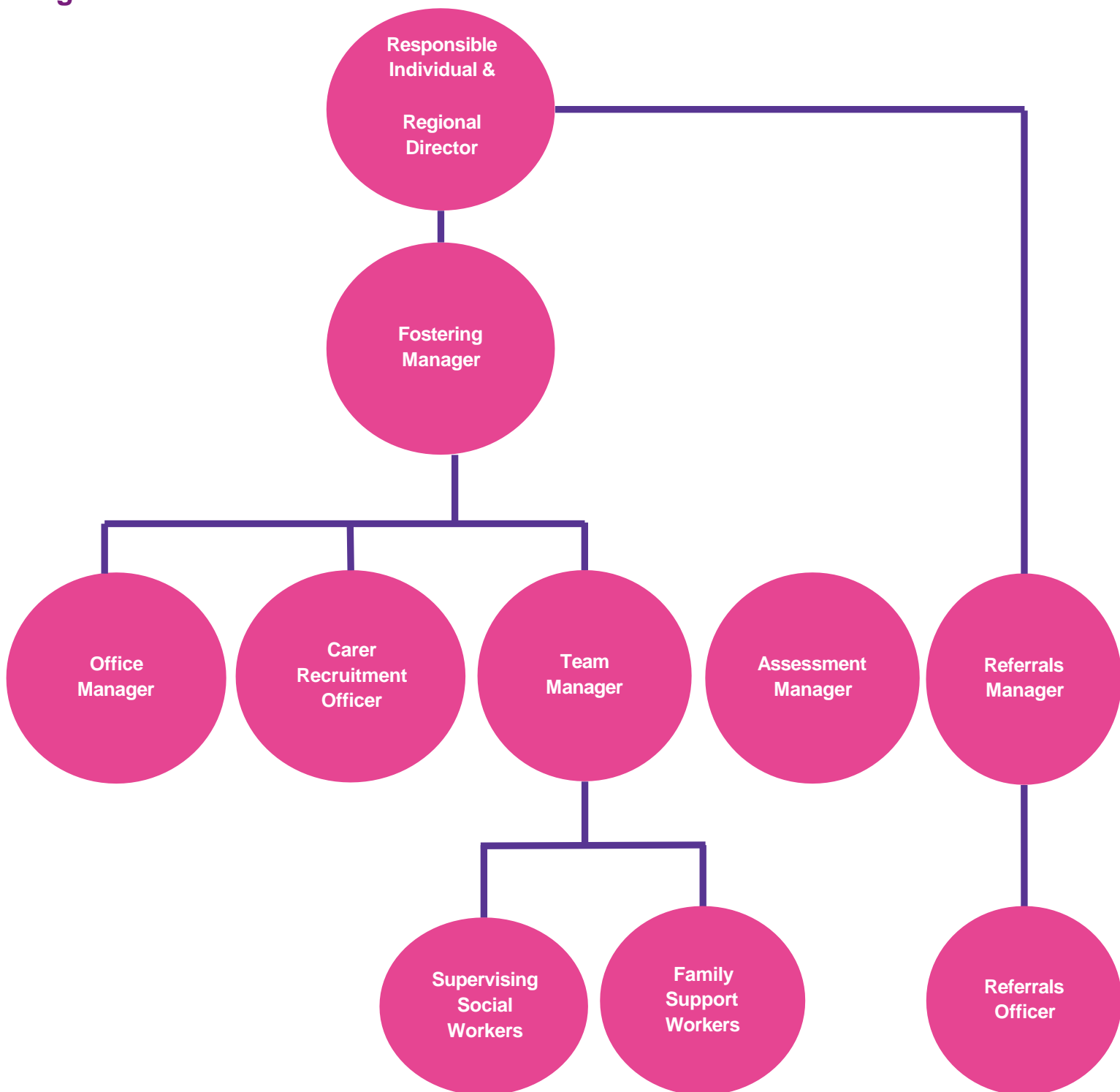
# Management and Regional Team Structure

## Management Structure



# Management and Regional Team Structure

## Regional Team Structure





# Management and Regional Team Structure

## The Staff Team

The Supervising Social Workers & Support Team, and Carer Recruitment Officer can work remotely to ensure that we meet the needs of our foster carers and children and young people. All our Social Workers hold recognised professional social work qualifications and are registered with Social Care Wales.

### The Regional Director

The Regional Director has a key strategic role and is responsible for developing and managing all aspects of fostering resources and support functions in all registrations within their allocated region (Wales).

The Regional Director supervises the Fostering Manager and supports them in delivering a high-quality service demonstrated by the results of external inspections, stakeholder feedback (Local Authorities, carers, children and young people), internal audits and key performance indicators. The Regional Director ensures that operating objectives and standards of performance are understood and owned by the whole staff team, seeking to continuously improve performance across all areas of service delivery and delivering aspirational outcomes for children and young people.

### The Fostering Manager

The Fostering Manager is responsible for the overall operation of the agency, including the supervision of the Team Manager, Office Manager and the Carer Recruitment Officer.

The Fostering Manager is responsible for producing the agency's business plan, achieving business objectives and maintaining budgetary control of the agency. They are also involved with the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation and meet monthly with Senior Managers and Directors. The Fostering Manager ensures that all practice is in accordance with agency policy and procedures, and contributes to the review and updating of these.

They oversee the completion of ongoing auditing and monitoring of the service to ensure the fostering service is of the highest standard. The Fostering Manager monitors and advises on serious complaints and allegations and ensures the appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place.

### The Team Manager

The Team Manager has line management and supervisory responsibility for the agency's Supervising Social Workers and Support Workers. The Team Manager oversees the day-to-day support offered to the agency's foster carers and fostered children and makes case decisions accordingly as part of this. The Team Manager oversees the matches undertaken on fostered children referred to the agency, along with supporting positive outcomes being achieved for all children placed. In conjunction with the Fostering Manager, the Team Manager undertakes auditing, ensures compliance with the Fostering Regulations and Guidance, and strives to achieve good outcomes for children. The Team Manager oversees the review of the agency's existing foster carers and any re-assessments as well as the assessment of any foster carers who are moving from other agencies within the group.

### Supervising Social Workers (SSWs)

The SSWs have responsibility for the assessment, support, supervision and annual review of foster carers. In addition, they work in close partnership with the Looked After Children's Social Worker and will attend Looked After Reviews and Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings with the foster carer to ensure the very best outcomes are achieved for children placed with our carers. SSWs are responsible for monitoring the continuous professional development and training of foster carers. They ensure that all foster carers complete the Training, Support and Development opportunities enabling them to provide high standards of care to children and young people who are fostered.



# Management and Regional Team Structure

The SSWs also support foster carers to complete the Fostering Induction programme (Scif) and maintain an ongoing portfolio of learning. All SSWs work closely with the Learning and Development Team to facilitate a training log for all foster carers. In addition, SSWs co-ordinate and deliver support groups for foster carers and provide the frontline delivery of Out of Hours Services to carers.

## **Fostering Support Worker**

Fostering Support Workers (FSW) provide specific support services to both foster carers and children and young people, and have experience of working with children in a variety of settings. Input is time-limited and solution focussed to enable those supported to achieve personal growth and development. Support services can include occasional transporting, supervising contact and undertaking direct work with children and young people. Direct work covers areas such as the development of independence skills, educational support and preparing for employment and further education, self-protection and risk reduction skills, improving self-confidence and self-esteem. This list is not exhaustive and all packages of work are bespoke to the individual needs of the child or young person, enabling them to aspire and achieve their best potential. Support Workers also run groups and activities for both looked after children and children who foster which provides them with opportunities to socialise, share experiences and derive support from their own peer groups.

## **Carer Recruitment Officer (CRO)**

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

## **The Referrals Hub**

The Referral Hub manages all incoming referrals and keyworking relationships with Local Authority placements teams in order to identify potential foster placements for looked after children. The Referrals Hub liaises with foster carers and works closely with social workers and managers to ensure that good

matching takes place by qualified social work staff; coordinating all arrangements through to placement.

The Referrals Hub has responsibility for collation and initial analysis of referral and placement data, and works closely with the Fostering Manager to agree contracts and financial arrangements for foster placements.

## **Office Manager**

The Office Manager has responsibility for maintaining the relevant checks for foster carers, adult household members and their support network e.g. DBS, Medicals, LA checks. They also have responsibility for the collation and distribution of all Annual Review and Fostering Panel paperwork, room bookings, food and refreshment. The Office Manager provides administrative support to the team, providing minutes of meetings, reports for auditing, arrangement meetings, sending out links and ordering of equipment.

## **Fostering Clinical Services**

Clinicians working in Fostering Services are qualified Psychologists and Psychotherapists with experience of working with families and with children with histories of trauma including neglect, violence, and abuse. They bring to the roles an extensive knowledge and experience of child development, trauma, and interpersonal dynamics within families, as well as understanding of the psychology of individuals. The focus of much of the work for clinicians in fostering is on supporting foster carers to use therapeutic approaches, including managing their own responses to difficult situations they are in; this is to support the child to feel safe, to develop and to flourish.

To achieve this, Clinicians offer consultations with Supervising Social Workers to develop understanding of families and children and develop next steps, and consultations with families. Direct work with children can also be provided where this is needed. Training is offered to both carers and to Supervising Social Workers to support their knowledge and practice in working with families. In addition, support groups with carers are offered, as well as reflective practice sessions with Supervising Social Workers. These are examples of what can be offered; at other times, a more extensive assessment may be needed for the child. What is provided will be driven by developing an understanding of what the child and the carers need, and this will be approached by working collaboratively with both Carers, Supervising Social workers and other professionals involved with the family to offer a full multi-disciplinary approach.

# Services Provided by the Agency

**Fostering Solutions** works closely with a number of Local Authorities, primarily with those in North Wales, to understand their specific needs relating to foster placements in particular areas. As an agency we then look to recruit foster families from a range of backgrounds who are able to provide the best possible homes for fostered children in the care of Local Authorities. The types of placement provided are:

## **Emergency**

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

## **Respite/Short Breaks**

We have a number of foster parents that can provide respite placements either on a regular basis or one-off holiday breaks.

## **Short term**

Short term foster placements vary in duration but can be for up to a couple of years as they are often linked to further assessments of the child, family or connected persons. Often short-term foster placements can involve court processes that consider the long-term plans for fostered children which can take time.

## **Bridging**

Many of our foster families can provide placements with foster parents who are experienced in bridging children to adoption, permanence or independence. Bridging placements form part of the long-term plan for the child and usually last up to 2 years.

## **Long Term/Permanence**

Many of our foster families like to offer long-term stability for fostered children by offering long-term or permanent care for them .i.e. until they are 18 and through into adulthood.

## **Parent with Child**

Some of our foster families can offer support to children and their parents for periods of time. Typically, in these scenarios foster parents will also be assisting Local Authorities with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity/capabilities.

## **Solo Placements**

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

## **Sibling Placements**

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

## **Unaccompanied Children and Young People**

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

## **When I'm Ready**

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

## **Bridge to Foster**

Bridge to foster is a specialist wrap around package of support and clinical input to support children and young people transitioning from residential to live in a family. Set across four stages the package reduces in support and levels of clinical input as the child settles and the placement is felt to be stable. Increased social work support ensures foster carers can share any concerns and develop new approaches to working through the challenges of helping children adjust to family life.

## **Invictus**

A specialist placement providing clinical assessment and work directly for the child and foster carer/s. Children and young people sometimes need extra support through work with a clinician and this usually is a referral to an external clinical resource such as CAHMS. Accessing such services can bring delays in the foster carers obtaining the extra support needed for the child. With a dynamic training package, Invictus aims to equip foster carers with the knowledge to build on existing skills.



# Matching

Matching fostered children to the best possible fostering family is a carefully considered process. We recognise that getting it right is critical and will advance the progress, experience, and outcomes for fostered children, increase placement stability and retention, and provide fostered children and foster families with positive outcomes.

At Fostering Solutions we recognise that fostered children are individuals, with a diverse range of experiences, needs, and talents, requiring fostering parents that are equally unique. Our foster parents have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience, and our task is to carefully match fostered children, with those foster parents who have the best possible experience, knowledge, skill set, and approach to meet their individual needs.

The Referrals Hub team are on hand to assist referring Local Authorities in finding the right match for fostered children. They work closely with the agency's Supervising Social Workers, foster parents and Local Authorities to ensure the best possible matches are made.

Fostering Solutions will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child/young person cannot reasonably be provided by the proposed foster parents.

During the referral and matching process foster parents are provided with all information made available to the agency in order for them to make fully informed decisions about whether they can meet the foster child's known and potential future needs and care plan. Foster parents are fully involved in the matching process will ultimately make the final decision in conjunction with the Fostering Manager and/or the Team Manager as to whether, or not, they can offer the fostered child a placement in their home.



Fostering Solutions also offers an emergency placement service outside normal working hours. Referrals in these instances will be managed by one of the agency's Supervising Social Workers, in conjunction with an agency duty manager, who will review the needs and circumstances of the fostered child referred and any suitable vacancies with the agency's foster families and match these to carers approved for emergency foster placements. The Supervising Social Workers have full access to carer information outside working hours, so quality matching is maintained in the same way as it is within office hours.



# National Fostering Group Children's Pledge

## Our Pledge To You. We Will:

### Keep you safe and care well for you

Ensure you live in a safe and homely place  
Listen to you, particularly when you raise concerns about your safety or the quality of your care  
Ensure that those people who care for you are trained and supported to keep you safe  
Make sure you are prepared for the next stage of your life – including managing money, looking after your health and taking care of where you live

### Help you get a good education (achieve and enjoy)

Make sure your education meets your needs  
Help you to attend your education provision and make good progress  
Have high expectations for your potential  
Celebrate your educational achievements  
Help those who care for you to have the right advice to support your education

### Help you be healthy and enjoy life

Help you to be physically and emotionally well  
Support you to take part in clubs and/or hobbies that interest you  
Support you to make healthy eating decisions and to cook healthy food  
Help you to socialise with your friends (as long as this is safe)  
Support you to take part in exercise and have fun

### Support your future and your next adventure

Help you to take part in positive activities  
Support you to undertake work experience  
Help you to find employment, an apprenticeship or to study further  
Support you to take part in an adventure when you reach sixteen

**Small steps, big outcomes.**

# Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

## Children & Young People's Rights

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

## Participation and Consultation

Fostering Solutions is committed to the inclusion of all stakeholders in the review and development of its services. The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are vital to ensuring the services meet their needs and remain relevant in a changing environment. Consultation takes various forms either through questionnaires, online surveys, consultation events, activities and feedback forms for carer annual reviews and LAC reviews.

## Support for Children in our Care

The children placed with Fostering Solutions come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and it is imperative that they receive the highest standards of care to enable them to aspire and achieve in our care. To this end, Fostering Solutions has established a clear online manual of policies and procedures that outlines the standards expected from all foster carers and staff.

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

It is expected that the Child's Social Worker will bring documentation to the meeting.

All children and young people placed will receive a copy of the Children's Guide at the time of placement, and will be supported to understand the contents of this via their foster carer, or via a 1:1 session with a member of staff from the agency. Supervising Social Workers will see each child placed on a regular basis (at least quarterly) to ascertain their views about their care and placement. During these visits the Supervising Social Worker will also inspect the child's bedroom to ensure that it is as it should be and appropriate to meet their needs.

Services available for children can include:

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

## Physical Environment

Fostering Solutions prides itself on the standard of our foster homes providing safe, stimulating, caring environments, where there is a focus on health, education, protection, continuity, diet and stimulation.

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



# Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

## Boundary Setting

Each foster home has their own Family Safer Caring Plan which highlights boundaries and expectations 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, and incorporated within their risk assessment, which is completed at the commencement of the placement.

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

## Healthy Care

in partnership with the foster carer, Social Worker and Health Authority, establish the individual health needs of each child in our care. Wherever possible fostered children 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

Fostering Solutions has policies on keeping, administering, and the recording of medication which each foster carer is expected to adhere to; this is monitored by the foster parent's Supervising Social Worker and the Fostering Manager. Foster carers encourage children to eat a varied diet. Special dietary requirements are written into the child's Placement Plan/Care Plan. Foster carers encourage children to participate in regular exercise to ensure the development of good physical, emotional and psychological health. Children are encouraged to attend out of school activities to enable them to widen their social circle and develop any talents and skills they may have.

Our foster carers will:

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

## Therapeutic Support Services

We believe that children and young people have a right to access therapeutic provision from Local Health Authorities. We have developed good working relationships with health colleagues in each local area and will access local provision wherever possible.

If children cannot access local provision due to the timescales involved, or the complexity of the situation; the agency can commission the services of suitably qualified, experienced and accredited professionals to undertake the work e.g. play therapists, child psychologists, art therapists.

## Education

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

# Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

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

## Contact with Friends and Relatives

Fostering Solutions 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 Plan/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 parent, 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) and that all parties remain safe.

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

In accordance with applicable legislation, standards, regulations and guidance, we encourage the importance of meaningful involvement and the significant impact that this can have on the child or young person's life. Our staff members and foster parents are experienced in working with birth families in a way that positively recognises and respects their involvement.

## Unauthorised Absence and Missing

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

## Safeguarding Procedures

Fostering Solutions has safeguarding procedures in place which are in line with Wales Safeguarding Procedures to safeguard and protect the welfare of all children. All staff and foster carers are required to fully adhere to these procedures. Where there is a need to review any safeguarding practices to ensure safe care is provided, this will be done in consultation with the Children's Social Worker, foster parent, and fostered child (where possible).

The Wales Safeguarding App is used for quick reference by all relevant staff.

# Consultation and Support for Children and Young People

## Outcomes Support – details of additional support offered to children, young people and foster families

The statistics available tell us that care-experienced children and young people are less likely to achieve well in their studies, more likely to suffer from mental health issues, more likely to enter the criminal justice system or, as an adult, other social care systems. At Fostering Solutions, we are working hard to change this bleak picture on an individual basis for children and young people in our care, and have dedicated support to help boost and improve outcomes. The additional resources can be accessed at any point, and the support offered aligns with our pledge to children and young people in one of our fostering families.

## Education Support

The Group Education Lead can support with any education enquiry, big or small, from a simple question which needs answering, to getting directly involved in a case where a member of staff or a foster parent has been unable to get a suitable or appropriate educational outcome for their child or young person.

- Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND) support
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) support
- Support with exclusions, Personal Education Plans (PEPs), new schools, transition etc

This work is always sensitively undertaken with stakeholders, with the needs of the child and young person and a sense of what the desired outcome should be, at the heart of the support delivered.

**Contact:** Hannah Burke – [hannah.burke@nfa.co.uk](mailto:hannah.burke@nfa.co.uk)

## Careers and Employability Support

This service can provide high-level support to social workers or foster families trying to find appropriate further opportunities for our young people. The service can also provide 1:1 Careers Advice and Guidance where necessary.

This is particularly important if:

- the young person is not currently in an education provision (NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training) or between education provisions
- the young person's current educational setting has not provided guidance at a suitable or appropriate level
- if opportunities for Careers Guidance were missed by the young person/adult

**Contact:** Hannah Burke – [hannah.burke@nfa.co.uk](mailto:hannah.burke@nfa.co.uk) who will refer you to the service

## Adventures Support

The National Fostering Group can support young people to:

- Undertake an award with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at the three levels of Bronze, Silver or Gold
- Join an expedition adventure with British Exploring Society

These opportunities allow young people and adults to acquire essential personal and social skills. It connects them to their communities and the great outdoors in a positive manner. These activities can help to support and boost other outcomes for young people.

**Contact:** Angela Golland – [angela.golland@nfa.co.uk](mailto:angela.golland@nfa.co.uk)

# Carer Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

## Recruitment

Fostering Solutions is committed to recruiting a diverse range of foster carers who can meet and match the needs of our children and young people.

The agency recruits individuals and families from different ethnic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds and from all areas of the regions in which we operate who can bring a variety of skill, knowledge and experiences to the fostering task.

## Application Process

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

All applicants must:

- Have a spare room
- Be over 21 years of age
- Be able to provide transport for children e.g. school, contact
- Be able to keep detailed records relating to children placed
- Be able to attend all relevant meetings
- Actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- Have some IT skills

## Initial Visits

Following the Initial Enquiry Screening Call, the Initial Visit (IV) will be arranged to take place at the prospective applicant's home by a suitably experienced and skilled member of the team. This provides an opportunity for the agency to share more detailed information with prospective carers around the realities of fostering, to answer any of their questions, and to view and assess the accommodation.

The discussion will include exploration of skills, knowledge and motivation to foster, and any practical requirements. Following the visit, a report is completed by the visiting worker. All IV reports are reviewed by a Manager, and outcomes shared with the prospective applicant, at which point an application to be assessed as a foster parent could be invited.

## Transferring Carers

Fostering Solutions recognises that foster parents 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. It is not uncommon for fostered children to remain with their foster parents following an agency transfer.



# Carer Recruitment, Assessment and Approval

## Assessment Process

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

The assessment includes completion of a number of relevant statutory checks and references including: DBS, Local Authority Checks, Medical, Ex-Partner References, Personal References (x3), Employer References, Health & Safety checks and Letting Agent consent etc. The assessor will also agree a schedule of visits to complete the assessment in a timely, focussed manner. The Applicants will be invited to undertake Skills to Foster Training, delivered by in-house trainers, and this feedback will form part of the assessment process. The assessment is comprehensive and evidence based, producing a report that covers individual profiles, past and present relationships/partnerships, support networks, interviews with children and adult members of the household, lifestyle, parenting capacity and experience, valuing diversity. The report will make recommendations on the terms of approval e.g. number of children, age range, placement types, and will be presented to the agency Fostering Panel. The applicants will also be required to complete a Safe Care Policy, Fire Evacuation Plan and Carer Profile.

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

Following panel presentation, the applicants will be notified immediately of the panel's recommendation in respect of their application. However, the final decision as to the applicant's approval will be made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). If applicants are unhappy with the ADM decision, they have a right of appeal, which can be made direct to the agency, or the Independent Review Mechanism within 28 days.

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

## Post Approval

The applicants become known as newly approved carers and will receive written confirmation of their approval. In addition, they will receive a Foster Carer Agreement detailing their responsibilities, and the agency's responsibilities, which must be signed. The agency will allocate a dedicated Supervising Social Worker to each fostering household, who will have responsibility for new carer induction and training plan, and for supporting the carers with completion of their Scif Folders.



# Annual Reviews

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

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

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

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

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





# The Fostering Panel

## Independent Fostering Panel

The Chairperson of the fostering panel is Allison Davies, who is a former teacher and SENCO Lead in a High School in North Wales. Allison has experience of supporting many children who are looked after in all areas of their education and social development. There is a diverse mix of experience on the Central List of Independent Panel members including education, health, youth justice, legal, social work, former fostered children and foster carers. Social work staff within the agency also attend as Fostering Panel Members and they bring a wealth of experience and knowledge regarding the fostering task.

Two Vice Chairs are part of the Panel Member Team, and these deputise when the Chair is unavailable.

The Panel Advisor is Julie Grant and the ADM, Bev Harrison, for the service is an experienced practitioner who provides supervisory support for the Chairperson.

Panel members are recruited, and applications are shortlisted depending on experience, an induction programme for panel members is in place, including the requirement to shadow a panel meeting prior to attending as a panel member. All records relating to panel members are held securely and are kept up to date by the Office Manager and Fostering Manager. The panel membership pool is diverse, and we have recently recruited new members onto the Central List which has further added to the diversity of the group.

All documentations shared with panel members are sent out via the services Data Base Systems which are password and pass phrase protected. The robustness of the process ensures that children are placed within a caring environment with people who have a genuine interest in caring for children and young people.

Joint training sessions with staff members and Independent Panel Members are attended to share good practice and discuss current trends within the fostering arena. Business Meetings with Independent Panel Members are also held to update Panel Members in relation to improvements made and current growth and newly introduced initiatives.

Panel members have annual appraisals which include the members learning opportunities, panel attendance and training and development needs. All panel members have mandatory training to complete with safeguarding being the priority. All Independent Panel members have access to the On Line training opportunities provided by Fostering Solutions.

# Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

## Supervising Carers

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

Fostering Solutions 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 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

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

All 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 will carry out at least one unannounced visit each year and a Health and Safety Check List to be completed annually, prior to the foster carer's annual review.

## Support

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

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

### **Additional support services to assist in meeting the needs of children placed could include:**

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

## Developing Skills

Developing skills means encouraging foster carers to attend training, helping them to put that training into practice, using resource material such as literature, guided reading, national legislation and agency policy.

## Information and Record Keeping

Foster carers have access to a comprehensive online manual of procedures. 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.

# Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

## Events

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

## Support Groups

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

## Newsletters

Fostering Solutions produces a quarterly newsletter for staff, foster carers, and children that shares information and celebrates achievements. All recipients are encouraged to contribute to the newsletters content.

The National Fostering Group also produces a quarterly newsletter for all foster carers to share information on Group wide information and developments.

## Membership

Once approved all foster carers are registered with The Fostering Network who provide support to Foster Carer households. This includes high quality specialist support, advice and information, legal expenses insurance, and rewards for foster carers with access to a huge range of discounts.

## Insurance

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

## Fostering Clinical Services

Clinicians working in Fostering Services are qualified Psychologists and Psychotherapists with experience of working with families and with children with histories of trauma including neglect, violence, and abuse. They bring to the roles an extensive knowledge and experience of child development, trauma, and interpersonal dynamics within families, as well as understanding of the psychology of individuals. The focus of much of the work for clinicians in fostering is on supporting Carers to use therapeutic approaches, including managing their own responses to difficult situations they are in; this is to support the child to feel safe, to develop and to flourish.

To achieve this, Clinicians offer consultations with Supervising Social Workers to develop understanding of families and children and develop next steps, and consultations with families. Direct work with children can also be provided where this is needed. Training is offered to both carers and to Supervising Social Workers to support their knowledge and practice in working with families. In addition, support groups with carers are offered, as well as reflective practice sessions with Supervising Social Workers. These are examples of what can be offered; at other times, a more extensive assessment may be needed for the child. What is provided will be driven by developing an understanding of what the child and the carers need, and this will be approached by working collaboratively with both Carers, Supervising Social workers and other professionals involved with the family to offer a full multi-disciplinary approach.

# Training and Development

Fostering Solutions recognises that our foster carers play a crucial role in the lives of the children and young people we care for. We want our foster carers to feel confident, knowledgeable, and ultimately be the best they can be for their foster children.

Our training courses are available to all our foster carers – completely free and delivered nationally, locally, and digitally. They range from the mandatory core courses for new Foster Carers, through to tailored training for specialist types of foster care.

## Our Approach to Training

With modern technologies at our disposal, training is delivered through a blended learning approach. This includes online learning, workshops/seminars, digital resources, and self-directed learning as well as face to face classroom sessions. This means we can support all of our Foster Carers wherever their location.

At Fostering Solutions Wales we have a dedicated Training Associate who can deliver training using the blended approach. Bespoke training is delivered for foster carers residing in Wales and linked to all legislation and regulations operating within Wales.

We also have a skilled and dedicated Learning and Talent team who work alongside and collaborate with our clinical psychologists to develop and deliver high quality learning solutions.

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

## Skills to Foster Training

The journey usually begins with the Skills to Foster Pre-approval course, this prepares new applicants for fostering.

The course focuses on the practical, day-to-day skills that all foster carers need. It links into the Induction Framework for Foster Carers in Wales and other professional development qualifications, as well as a competency-based assessment process

The course also provides our applicants with an opportunity to meet other applicants, experienced Foster Carers, who can share their expertise and some of the key people who will be supporting them throughout their journey, such as Supervising Social Workers, Team Managers and Fostering Managers.

And it goes without saying that our training is fun, informative and offers real insight into what lies ahead.

## Core Training

Skills to Foster is just the beginning. We have a number of additional courses that are mandatory for all Foster Carers. A list of Carer training is included in the Welcome Pack.



# Training and Development

## The Foundations for Therapeutic Parenting Programme

We are fully committed to becoming the provider of choice for child-centred and trauma informed practice within children's services – enhanced by further specialist support and training around learning disabilities and other complex diagnoses. We want to create a consistent shared language and golden thread that runs through all we do and that focusses on the primary task of building healing relationships with our children and young people.

The programme is three phased – Introduction, Foundation and Advanced courses – to ensure that professional and practice development is extensive and ongoing for all our teams. This means that our Foster Carers can expect to share the classroom and their experiences and knowledge with National Fostering Group colleagues as well as other carers.

Each course focuses on keeping concepts accessible and understandable – and on developing the ability to put theory into practice. The key areas are;

- The impact of complex trauma and adverse childhood experiences on children's development
- Understanding behaviour as a form of communication
- Building therapeutic relationships through PACE approaches
- The importance of reflective practice

We also provide access to a significant amount of online research resources. Learners can then develop at their own pace as well as having somewhere to research or explore ideas they want to know more about - in their own time or with their Supervising Social Worker.

## Continued Professional Development

As professionals we all share a responsibility to develop our skills and knowledge. Legislation, child research and policies are continually changing and evolving, therefore our continued professional development offer is essential.

We have an extensive suite of courses that aim to address specific training needs, here is just a small sample of topics:

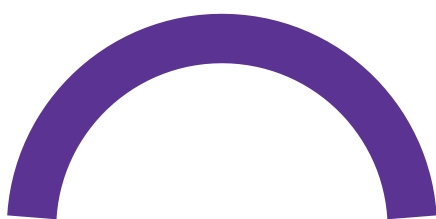
- Introduction to Neurodevelopmental Differences
- Various Contextualised Safeguarding Topics – including CSE, County Lines, FGM, etc.
- Parent and Child
- Bridge to Foster

Our Foster Carers training is managed via a world class Learning Management System (LMS). This means that they can see at a glance what training is required for their role, check their own progress, enrol on classroom and virtual courses and access hundreds of online learning modules – all for free!

These include the following suites of courses:

- Care Certificate
- Communication and Social Skills
- Cyber Security
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Health and Safety
- Health and Wellbeing
- Finance Skills
- Food Hygiene
- IT Skills
- Personal Development

There really is something for everyone and content is added to our LMS regularly.





# Finance & Insurance

## Finance

Fostering Solutions values the work its foster carers undertake and a generous fostering allowance is paid directly to foster carers via BACS payments, two payments every month. The allowance enables foster carers to provide food and clothing for a child they care for and recompenses them for the professional task they undertake.

All foster carers are classed as 'Self-Employed' and as such must ensure they pay their own tax and national insurance contributions. Detailed financial information and guidance is supplied to foster carers and an annual statement is provided for tax purposes.

Most expenses incurred when fostering are covered by the fostering allowance and fee paid to foster carers vary according to the type of placement.

The fostering allowance is not payable when there is no child in placement.

## Insurance

Fostering Solutions North Wales 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:

- Foster Carers' Public Liability – Public Liability limit – £25 million
- Damage to Foster Carers' Buildings and/or Contents
- Accidental loss, destruction or damage caused by a Foster
- Child (under the age of 18) and/or wilful damage caused by the Foster Child's natural parents.

The Insurers liability shall not exceed:

- £500,000 in respect of any one occurrence of Damage
- £250 in respect of any one theft of money
- £2,000 in respect of any one theft of jewellery
- Subject to an aggregate limit of £500,000 per placement.

The Insurer shall only be liable under for that part of each and every occurrence of Damage which exceeds:

- £2,000 where the Foster Child is on remand
- £150 in respect of all other occurrences of damage





# Complaints & Compliments

## Complaints and Compliments

The service has a robust complaints system in place with policies and procedures to inform staff members and others how to make a complaint and what will happen at each stage of the process. The complaint's policy is accessible to anyone at any time and once a complaint is received it is acted upon in a timely manner.

As a fostering agency we feel that there is always something to be learnt from receiving complaints and once the process is completed, actions and outcomes are discussed individually and as a team to reflect on learning outcomes. Complaints can often improve the way in which we provide our service.

The service also receives compliments which are shared with the team and Line Managers.

The agency has a comprehensive complaints procedure in place, the policy and procedures for raising complaints and concerns are available to children, foster carers, members of the public and all stakeholders and is reviewed regularly. The complaints procedure places a strong emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and an early stage (Stage 1 complaints).

Complaints that move to Stage 2 are dealt with by an Independent Manager who conducts a full investigation and makes recommendations for consideration, resolution and action. Any complaints unresolved by Stage 2 of the complaints process go to Stage 3 and are presented to an independent panel with members not associated with the regional office.

All complaints are undertaken in accordance with the policy and procedures in place. Complaints are managed in the first instance by the Manager, Julie Grant, at Fostering Solutions, Clwyd House, 57 Regent Street, Wrexham, North Wales, LL11 1PF who can be contacted by telephone 01978 311590 or by email: [Julie.grant@fosteringsolutions.com](mailto:Julie.grant@fosteringsolutions.com). All complaints are shared with the Regional Director/Responsible Individual in a timely manner.

All our foster carers are provided with independent support from a fostering network service who are able to advise on legal and insurance matters as well as offer support in relation to complaints and allegations.

All compliments are received with thanks and are usually in recognition of the support and guidance afforded to fostering families. Fostering Solutions staff have recently received compliments from foster carers, children's family members, local authority social workers and independent reviewing officers. A portfolio of compliments are stored in the Wrexham Office for all to view.

# Complaints

## Support

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

Sometimes children and adults need help and support to make a complaint. The child may have support from his or her parent, social worker, Independent Visitor or foster carer.

A child who wishes to make a complaint about any aspects of his or her care should receive assistance to access independent advice and support from their Independent Reviewing Officer. Any complaint made by a Looked After Child will also be referred to a recognised advocacy service if the child wishes. Fostering Solutions can refer all children living in Wales to Tros Gynnal Advocacy Services.

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

## Allegations of abuse

If any complaint is made to any employee of Fostering Solutions that is clearly of a child protection nature, that complaint will be immediately passed on to the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Team where the child resides as well the Local Authority of the child if this is different. If at any time during an investigation into a complaint it becomes clear that there may be child protection implications, the current investigation will be halted and the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Lead will be notified immediately CIW will be informed.

Where a complaint is made against the Fostering Manager, the complaint will be investigated by the Regional Director.



# Professional Membership

## **CoramBAAF**

As a partner agency of the National Fostering Group, Fostering Solutions has a corporate membership with CoramBAAF. CoramBAAF promotes the highest standards of child-centred policies and services.

It influences policy-makers, helps find new families for children and supports professionals, adoptive parents and foster carers.

## **The Fostering Network**

As a partner agency of the National Fostering Group, Fostering Solutions 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**

As a partner agency of the National Fostering Group, Fostering Solutions 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.

## **Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP)**

NAFP is a not-for-profit company formed in 2008 comprising of independent and voluntary sector fostering providers. This trade association acts as one voice and is therefore able to campaign and represent the sector more effectively. In addition, it allows members to share knowledge and experience within the sector and provides formal representation in national forums and sector developments.

## **Research in Practice**

Our Social Workers and Managers have membership of Research in Practice which brings together academic research and practice expertise. This ensures our staff have access to the latest research, policy, case law, legal updates and resources to support and enhance their professional practice.

## **Restraint Reduction Network**

We are members of the Restraint Reduction Network – the world leading restraint reduction charity. Our membership demonstrates our commitment to reducing restrictive practice. It provides staff with the opportunity to learn from sector leaders and access news, guidance and resources to inform their work with children, young people and their carers.

# Contact Details

## Essential Addresses and Contact Details

### Responsible Individual

Lynn Webb  
National Fostering Group  
Atria,  
Spa Road  
Bolton, BL1 4AG  
Tel: 01204 522 667  
[Lynn.webb@nfa.co.uk](mailto:Lynn.webb@nfa.co.uk)

### Fostering Manager

Julie Grant  
Fostering Solutions  
Clwyd House  
57 Regent Street  
Wrexham, LL11 1PF  
Tel: 01978 311 590  
[Julie.grant@fosteringsolutions.com](mailto:Julie.grant@fosteringsolutions.com)

### North Wales Advocacy Services

Tros Gynnal Plant  
Tel: 0800 111 6880  
Email: [northwalesadvocacy@trosgynnalplant.org.uk](mailto:northwalesadvocacy@trosgynnalplant.org.uk)

### Children's Commissioner for Wales

**Rocia Cifuentes**  
Llewellyn House  
Harbourside Business Park  
Harbourside Road  
Port Talbot, SA13 1SB  
Tel: 0808 8801 1000 / 01792 765 600  
Email: [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)

### Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Sarn Mynach  
Llandudno Junction  
Conwy LL31 9RZ  
Tel: 0300 062 5609  
Email: [ciw.llandudnojunction@gov.wales](mailto:ciw.llandudnojunction@gov.wales)





# Practice Amendments in Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid 19)

## CORONOVIRUS

During 2020, Fostering Solutions day to day practices were reviewed in response to the Global Coronavirus Pandemic. Whilst the pandemic triggered the agency to reflect and adapt to new ways of working, the agency continued to provide the full range of services and maintain appropriate staffing levels.

Between the date of lockdown on 23rd March 2020 until restrictions were eased at the end of the summer 2020, the Wrexham office was staffed one or two days per week by one staff member with additional risk assessments in place. Some staff have remained working from home following the lockdown period, adhering to the Welsh Government recommendations throughout. Social work staff have made visits to fostering households when it has been safe to do so, and Personal Protective Equipment has been provided to all staff to ensure their safety and reduce the risk of spreading the virus to foster carers and children. Throughout lockdown Fostering Solutions have remained fully functional, continuing to meet both Regulatory requirements and agency policy and procedures.

Some fostering practices were amended, where necessary, in response to the Welsh Government's requirements, particularly in the areas relating to travel and social distancing.

The following visits, meetings, groups and forums were all enabled to take place virtually, via video conferencing facilities:

Staff team meetings, staff supervision, attendance at meetings, and learning opportunities, Foster Carer supervision, Annual Foster Carer Reviews, attendance at meetings, and learning opportunities, children's Observational Visits, Bedroom Checks, and Children Seen Alone visits were all undertaken remotely.

Supervising social workers have been creative to ensure that they engage with foster carers at virtual support groups, undertaking games and quizzes with children and foster carers to maintain support and continue with an open and honest relationship under difficult circumstances.

The Independent Panel members have met virtually via MS Teams and this has worked well with positive feedback from panel members, staff and foster carers. Enquiries and initial visits as well as assessments have been conducted remotely with visits being undertaken to new applicants at some time during the assessment process. Training opportunities, including Skills to Foster courses, have been delivered virtually and this is something that the agency have taken forward and expanded alongside face-to-face training opportunities for some courses.

The Covid 19 restrictions enabled us to 'trial' new ways of working and assess the potential benefits for the agency as a whole, its staff, foster carers, and young people. Our aim, as always, is to provide the highest quality of support and supervision to our staff and foster carers and to connect in a meaningful way with our young people to ensure they remain happy, safe, and thriving in our care.

We recognise that social work practice is complex and requires flexibility, so rather than being prescriptive, we have empowered our staff to use their professional judgement and deliver a bespoke approach which is tailored to the individual needs of foster carers, children and young people and staff, whilst still maintaining safeguarding procedures and delivering a service to high standards.

“We are part of National Fostering Group. By supporting foster parents to create safe, secure, nurturing environments, we help vulnerable children and young people to thrive and settle into education, giving them the great start in life they deserve.”

## Fostering Solutions - Wales

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