

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOSTERING SERVICES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Social Services
Bridgend County Borough Council
Sunnyside
Bridgend
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(Last reviewed January 2010)

Introduction to the Fostering Services Statement of Purpose

This statement has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 (3(1)) and is referred to as “the Statement of Purpose”. Regulation 4 details the requirements for the review of the Statement of Purpose. The National Assembly for Wales has issued National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Standard 1 elaborates further requirements as to its content and arrangements for its review.

This Statement of Purpose provides information about Bridgend’s Fostering Services which are provided through Bridgend Foster Care Team, Resolutions Fostering Service and the Family Link Scheme. It gives an outline of the aims and objectives of the Services and some of their key features. It will be provided to Foster Carers approved by Bridgend and to applicants beginning an assessment to become a foster carer. It will be made available to social workers considering making a placement with any of the Services in paper format whilst electronic copies will be provided on the intranet at office bases. It will be made available on request to parents, children and young people. However, a Children’s Guide will contain a summary of the content, as well as other information, and will be of more interest and relevance to most children and young people.

In addition to the Statement of Purpose, there is a range of specific policy and procedural documents that reflect the aims, objectives, service principles and standards set out in the Statement of Purpose.

The Statement of Purpose is updated on an annual basis, reflecting changes that are being made to improve the service. Service improvement proposals will be informed by consultation with parents and children/young people, and social workers, as well as foster carers, staff in Bridgend Foster Care Team and other stakeholders. The outcomes of consultation throughout the year will be considered between January and March each year, so that a revised Statement of Purpose is in place from April 1st each year.

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1. Management Structure

- The Team Manager for the Fostering Services is the operational manager and reports to the Group Manager Service Provision – she is **Natalie Silcox**.
- The Group Manager Service Provision is a third tier officer – she is **Val Jones**
- The Head of Safeguarding & Family Support is a second tier officer – she is **Lindsay Harper**.
- The Director of the Personal Services Directorate is the **Corporate Director- Children, Hilary Anthony**.

2. Services Provided by the individual Fostering Service Areas and any restrictions operated

The Fostering Service provides a range of foster care to children and young people who are looked after by Bridgend County Borough Council. The service offers the following types of placements to children and young people from birth up to 18 years of age:

Services to looked after children and young people

- Emergency, respite and short term care
- Long-term care
- Relative care – care by friends or family members who are approved as foster carers
- Reg.38 care - Immediate Placement of a Child with Relatives or Friends under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Service (Wales) Regulations 2003
- Short break care – respite care for children to support them in the community or with other foster carers
- Facilitate Fun Days, Christmas Parties and special events
- Resolutions Fostering Service
- The Family Link Scheme
- Dedicated Private Fostering officer

Services to children of foster carers

- Access to Fun Days, Christmas Parties
- Provision of a children's support group
- Recognition via sons and daughters week facilitated by Fostering Network

Services to Prospective Carers

- Information and advice on fostering – provided through leaflets, web-site and monthly 'Meet & Greet' information sessions; telephone responses and initial assessment visit to the home to determine application proceeding
- Assessment –qualified social worker either from Bridgend Foster Care Team or a small independent pool of assessors; preparation training provided by Bridgend Foster Care Team or independent provider; close liaison with an experienced carer during the period of assessment in addition to occasional contact with supervising social worker from the team; compilation of report to Panel
- Prospective Resolutions carers will be assessed by a Resolutions social worker
- Prospective Family Link carers will be assessed by a Family Link social worker

Services to Carers

- Support and supervision not less than monthly
- Identified buddy service from experienced foster care colleague (Level 4 carer)
- Annual Review
- Individual Training and Development Plan
- Training Programme and portfolio
- Provision of written guidance – foster carer handbook
- Access to N.V.Q in Health and Social Care Level 3
- Access to Respite Care
- Out of hours support – by Emergency Duty Team
- Information Consultation Event 3 times per year
- Foster Carer Agreement
- Facilitated Support Groups
- Facilitated local branch of Foster Care Association
- Maintenance and discretionary payments
- Access to fee payments
- Insurance cover
- Individual membership for all fostering households to the Fostering Network which includes legal cover in the event of any allegation
- All Resolutions foster carers will be registered to undertake NVQ in Health and Social Care Level 3
- Quarterly newsletter to which carers can contribute

Financial arrangements

The payments scheme is based on payment for skills relating to the development and achievement of NVQ and continued successful fostering provision. There are four appointed Level 4 foster carers who are carers who have achieved their NVQ and who are experienced carers with additional responsibilities to their foster caring; the carers all have a caseload of colleague carers whom they support and advise and they additionally can be called to assist with other duties including training, recruitment and activities for foster children.

Foster carers receive fostering allowances per child per week as follows:

Age	Fostering Allowances
	£
0-4	125.21
5-10	142.49
11-15	177.38
16-17	224.37

In addition, foster carers can receive a fee payment per child per week, according to the level they are eligible for, as follows:

	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Age	Fee	Fee	Fee
	£	£	£
0-4	72.45	144.83	177.80
5-10	72.45	144.83	177.80
11-15	92.19	184.45	217.28
16-17	92.19	184.45	217.28

The criteria for each Level relate to:

Level 2

Satisfactory annual review
Registration for NVQ
Level of skill/responsibility

Level 3

Possession of NVQ
Level of skill and additional responsibilities

Level 4

Selection and interview process
Additional responsibilities

There are also a number of additional payments, mileage expenses, initial clothing and change of school allowances, birthday and Christmas allowances, specific equipment purchasing and some additional exceptional circumstances discretionary payments.

Resolutions Fostering Service is a partnership of four local authorities, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Vale of Glamorgan. Resolutions provide planned placements for young people who present challenging behaviour and have experienced previous placement breakdown or who are involved in the criminal justice system. Resolutions operate to specific criteria.

Criteria for placements

Youth Offending Service Placements

Young people eligible for the scheme will be **aged 10 – 17 years** and:

1. When aged 10 – 16 has been remanded by a court to local authority accommodation under S.23 CYPA 1969 and a decision has been made to place the young person in accommodation under S 21 Children Act 1989
2. When aged 10 –17 has appeared before a criminal court and is remanded on bail with a condition to Reside as Directed by the local authority

And

- The young person is at risk of bail being refused due to seriousness of offence or Persistent Young Offender status
 - A bail assessment (Bail Asset*) has been undertaken by the YOT
 - A bail supervision programme has been set up in conjunction with other bail conditions
 - The young person/family have agreed to accommodation under S.20 CA 1989
3. sentenced to a 90-day residence requirement as part of a Supervision Order, where the order is an alternative to custody. *The young person does not have to be in a Resolutions placement to access this option*
 4. refused bail at the police station and transferred into the care of the Local Authority until the **next available court**, under Section 38(6)(b) of PACE Act 1984 (as amended by Sections 24 & 28 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994)

(NB police bail, ie to return to the police station or attend court at a future date, is **not** a criterion for placement)

Child Care Placements

Young people eligible for the scheme will be aged **10 – 17 years** and:

- presenting severely challenging behaviour**

- already accommodated by a Local Authority **or** subject to a full **or interim Care Order placed** with parents
- will have experienced at least one previous placement breakdown **or** in a fragile placement where a disruption meeting has identified an alternative placement is required

And

- at risk of an out-of-county Residential placement **or**
- at risk of an Independent Fostering Agency placement **or**
- in a position to return from an out of county residential establishment or IFA **or**
- at risk of Secure Accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 **or**
- being discharged from a Secure Accommodation placement under S. 25 CA 1989

* A completed Bail Asset should be faxed to Resolutions

**Within the partner local authorities, there is no currently agreed definition of severely challenging behaviour. Within the scheme, severely challenging behaviour is taken to denote behaviour that has had a substantial detrimental impact on some, or all, of those in direct contact with the young person – family, carers, school and community. The presenting problems are likely to include social, emotional, physical, educational and mental health problems. To be eligible for a placement within the scheme, the challenging behaviour will have resulted in at least one accommodation breakdown.

Resolutions carers currently receive £395.23 per placement per week, regardless of whether there is a young person in placement. Resolutions carers who successfully achieve NVQ Level 3 Care also receive an additional £23.32 per placement per week. Resolutions carers receive reimbursement for telephone calls and mileage directly related to the young person. Resolutions carers also have 28 days paid leave and up to 14 days paid respite which is discretionary.

The Family Link Scheme - offers family-based short break care to disabled children and young people.

Short breaks help to combat the isolation often felt by disabled children and young people enabling them to meet new people and become part of a 'second family,' widening their social life and offering new experiences.

These short breaks also serve to give parents of disabled children and young people the chance to take a break and spend quality time with other children or do things that might be difficult to do when caring full-time.

The breaks we promote take place, not in institutions, but in the homes of carefully selected carers/families in the child's own community setting.

The children who use family-based short breaks through the service will have been diagnosed as having learning disabilities; other disabilities include physical disabilities, complex healthcare needs, or sensory impairment.

Up to 120 days per year depending on the assessment of need may be available to support these children and young people enabling them to remain living with their families.

Aims and Principles of the Family Link Scheme

Aims:

- To support parents who have a disabled child/young person, by offering regular short breaks for the child/young person away from home.
- Offers parents a break, the child/young/person new experiences and chance to develop a measure of independence from the family.
- Encourage the child/young person to develop their own individuality, confidence and self-esteem.
- The child/young person remains in their own community.

Principles:

- Needs and interests of children/young people are best served by growing up within their own families and communities.
- Flexibility and choice in arranging breaks.
- Equality of access, irrespective of degree of disability.
- Breaks related to identified needs.
- Full participation by all concerned.

Current payments to Link carers are:-

Weekly retainer:	£42.66
Block session (for a 6 hour period):	£8.17
Mileage re-imbursed at	£0.498

3. Aims and Objectives

The Fostering Service aims to provide high quality foster care to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people who are looked after by Bridgend County Borough Council.

Service objectives:

- To ensure that children are enabled to form secure attachments to carers capable of providing safe and effective care
- To ensure children are protected from emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect
- To ensure that children benefit from education opportunities, health care and social care
- To ensure that the services provided are flexible, responsive and supportive of carers

- To enable foster carers to provide high quality care through any upheaval in their individual and family lives
- To empower staff and carers to promote the best interests of children considered for a foster service
- To encourage the whole organisation to value and respect the contribution of foster carers and work in partnership with them
- To actively involve carers in planning services
- To ensure that foster carers are appropriately skilled, trained and qualified, and to promote the uptake of training
- To promote the foster care service in the wider community within Bridgend County Borough
- To continue to recruit foster carers to meet the current and future needs of the looked after children of Bridgend County Borough.
- To increase the numbers of Bridgend County Borough approved foster carers who reside within this local authority to:
 - provide more placement choice
 - promote continuity of existing health and education arrangements
 - match children with suitable foster carers
- To develop fostering service provision to include support care.
- To provide specific and enhanced support services to registered foster carers

4. Principles and Standards of Care

The Fostering Service seeks to ensure that its policies, procedures and practice comply with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003, the UK National Standards for Foster Care and the National Assembly for Wales' Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. Similarly, the Service's practice reflects the Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers.

The Fostering Service:

- Seeks to provide high quality placements with foster carers in Bridgend for all looked after children who require placements in a family setting
- Seeks to provide choice of placement for all looked after children

- Respects the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of children and foster carers
- Supports processes that ensure assessment of children's needs and sound matching with foster carers with the skills to meet those needs, and continuing and rigorous planning, review and support
- Recognises the disadvantage some looked after children experience, especially with regards to health and education, and actively works to promote positive outcomes
- Seeks to work in partnership with all those involved in the care of looked after children, including children, their families, foster carers and other professionals
- Respects foster carers as partners in the provision of a professional service
- Values the unique contribution each foster carer has to offer and supports foster carers to continuously improve their capabilities through training and personal development opportunities
- Seeks to continuously evaluate and improve its services

5. The Qualifications and Experience of Bridgend Foster Care Team

Bridgend Foster Care Team consists of the following staff:

- One Team Manager
- 2 Senior Practitioner posts (1 upgraded to Project Manager Recruitment and appointed October 2008 for fixed term of 2 years)
- 8 Supervising / Assessing Social Workers
- 1.5 Support Workers
- 2 Administrative staff

Team Manager – Natalie Silcox

(a) Qualifications	BA Business Administration (Hons)	2002
	Counselling Level 3	2003
	DIPSW (MA)	2004
	PQ1	2007
	Higher Ed Cert in Child Protection	2009

- (b) Experience** The Manager is a qualified and registered social worker with 5 years post qualifying experience in the childcare field in a generic district team. The manager has previously worked as a senior social work practitioner, in Bridgend Foster Care. The manager is currently working towards the NVQ Level 4 in Management
- The Manager was appointed in July 2009 and is responsible for the management and supervision of Bridgend Foster Care Team.

Project Manager Recruitment

- a) Qualifications** BSc(Hons) -Sociology and Social Policy 1992
Diploma in Social Work 1994
MSc - Social Work 1994
Practice teacher accreditation 2001
NVQ assessor 2003
Post Qualifying Social Worker (PQSW childcare award) 2004
NVQ Level 4 in Management 2007
- (b) Experience** The recruitment project manager is a qualified and registered social worker with 15 years post qualifying experience as a social worker and manager including childcare, child protection & looked after children at both a social work & senior social work level. The recruitment manager has worked as a social Worker & Senior Practitioner fostering and adoption, a Practice Teacher, a NVQ assessor & as a Team Manager for a local authority fostering service. The recruitment project manager was appointed in October 2008.

Senior Practitioner

- a) Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work 2004
Certificate in Welfare Studies 2002
ONC Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Skills 2002
Certificate in Youth Work 2002
- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 4.5 years post qualifying experience in the Family Link Scheme. Prior to qualifying has

experience of advocacy and mediation work with families, youth work and in the probation and youth offending fields.

There are 8 Supervising Social Workers within Bridgend Foster Care Team.

Supervising Social Worker (1)

- (a) Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work 2004
Diploma in Welfare Studies 2000
PDS Counselling Certificate 1999
Institute of Personnel Management Diploma 1985
H & E Children in Need of Protection Oct 2007
- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 5 years post qualifying experience in family placement work. Prior to qualifying has experience of working in mental health, drug and alcohol services in the voluntary sector.

Supervising Social Worker (2)

- (a) Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work 2005
BTEC Early Childhood Studies
BSc (Econ) (Hons) Social Welfare
CACDP British Sign Language Level 1& 2
BTEC Professional Development Certificate in Counselling Skills 2007
- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 4 years experience. Prior to qualifying has experience of a charity for children with learning difficulties and an independent fostering agency.

Supervising Social Worker (3)

- (a) Qualifications** Diploma in social work 2004
Diploma in Welfare Studies 2002
Certificate in Welfare Studies 2001
- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 5 years post qualifying experience in child care within B.C.B.C. Prior to qualifying has 3 years experience in Youth Development work.

Supervising Social Worker (4) Part Time

- (a) **Qualifications** BA (Hons) Social Work 1986
CQSW 1986
A1 Assessor Award 2005
- (b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with over 10 years. Post qualifying experience with young offenders. Also since qualifying has worked in Fostering and Supported Lodgings, in Training as a Practice Placement Coordinator and as a freelance practice assessor re NVQ and social work degree students.

Supervising Social Worker (5) – Part Time

- (a) **Qualifications** BA (Hons) Religious Studies 2000
Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work 2002.
Post Qualifying Award 2006
- (b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 7 years post qualifying experience in fostering & adoption within B.C.B.C. Has worked as Senior practitioner within the team. Has experience of working in the voluntary sector in Britain and abroad.

Currently on maternity leave

Maternity cover for Supervising Social worker (5)

- (a) **Qualifications** HNC Business Management
DIPSW 2004
- (b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 6 years experience in generic childcare settings. Previous experience working with adults with learning disabilities within a daycare setting.

Supervising Social Worker (6)

- (a) **Qualifications** BA Hons in Sociology 2000
MA in Social Work 2008
ECDL computer studies

- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker since June 2008. Practice learning opportunities in a City Centre Team. Leaving Care and an independent fostering agency. Prior to qualifying has worked as Social Work Assistant for other authorities in referral teams and in a long term child protection team. Has experience of youth and community work.

Supervising Social Worker (7)

- (a) Qualifications** Ext Mur Studies Diploma in Social Studies 1986
 Cert. in youth and community work 1986
 CQSW 1989

- (b) Experience** Twenty years post qualifying experience in children and families child protection, experience of a fostering team and specialist adolescent fostering team, Appointed full time with part time responsibility for the specific post of Private Fostering Officer.

Supervising Social Worker (8)

- (a) Qualifications** Diploma in Welfare Studies
 BSc Social Work 2009
 ECDL

- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker since June 2009. Practice learning opportunities in disabled children’s team, fostering team. Social worker has undertaken work in the voluntary work with Sure Start and facilitated a support group for parents with children with Dyspraxia.

Supervising Social Worker (9)

- a) Qualifications** Diploma in Welfare Studies 2001
 WJEC Counselling Skills 2002
 Diploma in Social Work 2004
 BA (Hons) Degree in Community Studies 2005

- b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 13 years experience. Has worked as a social worker with Disabled Children’s of 14-18 years. Supervising Social Worker since September 2008. Prior to social work qualification worked in Childcare, Youth Work and Welfare Rights (Benefit advice and representation).

Support Worker (1)

- (a) **Qualifications** Certificate in Social Science with the Open University 2004, BTEC Diploma in Computer Studies and Information Technology 2001
City & Guilds in Computer Studies 2001
ECDL Computer Studies 2001
RSA Stage 3 Typing & Word Processing Audio Typing 2001
- (b) **Experience** Administrative experience over 21 years both private sector and statutory services.
5 years experience of working within Children's Services including 4 years with responsibility for providing business support to the Fostering & Adoption Service. Has worked in current role since November 2005.

Support Worker (2) Part Time

- (a) **Qualifications** BA Hons in English Literature 1992
- (b) **Experience** Seven years experience of work within Children's Services as administrator for teams such as Strategic, Child Protection, Adoption and Fostering and Supported Lodgings. Prior to this experience as Personnel Officer within Social Services. Has worked in this role since September 2003 with a break of one year's maternity leave from August 2007 to August 2008.

Clerical Assistant (Team Clerk) (1)

- (a) **Qualifications** Five "O" Levels
- (b) **Experience** Administrative assistant with 31 years experience within the public sector (transport). 2 years experience within the private sector. Has worked within Children's Service for 2 years, appointed as temporary team clerk to Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team in August 2007.

Clerical Assistant (2) Part Time

- (a) **Qualifications** ILEX level Part 1 (Higher professional Diploma in Law)
NVQ Level 3 in Secretarial and Business Admin.

(b) Experience Past experience within private law practices, admin assistant. 18 months experience as Level 1 business support within LAC – Childrens Directorate.

Clerical Assistant (2) Part Time

(a) Qualifications GCSEs 1994 (Welsh, Mathematics, English Language Literature, Business Studies, History, Religious Studies, Catering, Science Double Award)
NVQ Level 2 (Sport and Recreation) 1997
AAT Intermediate 2001

(b) Experience Accounts junior and subsequently accounts supervisor for a conveyancing firm for 6 years. Experience in this post of supervision and staff management. Appointed as Level 2 Admin Assistant January 2006 with responsibility within Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team.

Resolutions Fostering Service

Resolutions Fostering Service consists of the following staff:

- One Team Manager
- One Senior Practitioner
- 2.5 Supervising Social Workers
- One Business Support

Resolutions Manager - Mandy Jenkins

(a) Qualifications	BA (Hons) Humanities	1991
	Diploma Social Work	1993
	Diploma Applied Social Studies	1993
	Practice Teaching Award	2001
	NVQ Level 4 – Management	2008
	Certificate in Legal Studies	2009

(b) Experience The Manager is a qualified and registered social Worker with 17 years post qualifying experience. The manager was appointed to her current post in 2003. Has previous experience of working in community projects, Youth Justice and Youth Offending Teams and as a Manager of a Conference and Review Service.

Resolutions Senior Social Work Practitioner

(a) Qualifications	BA (Hons) English/ Classical Studies	1980
	PGCE	1981
	Diploma SW	1994
	MA in Social Work	1995
	NVQ Assessor Award	2004

(b) Experience The Senior Social Work Practitioner is a qualified and registered social worker with 16 years post qualifying experience and was appointed to her current post in 2002. Has previous experience is of working in the residential sector, teaching, as a child care social worker, Remand Fostering and in a Youth Offending Team

Resolutions Supervising Social Worker (1)

(a) Qualifications	Preliminary Certificate in Social Care	1993
	BTEC, National Diploma Social Care	1995
	BTEC, Advanced National Diploma Counselling	1997
	Diploma Social Work	1999
	BA (Hons) Community Studies	2000

(b) Experience Is a qualified and registered Social Worker with 11 years post qualifying experience and was appointed to her current post in 2003. Has previous experience of working in a Youth Offending Team

Resolutions Supervising Social Worker (2)

(a) Qualifications	Certificate in Welfare Studies	1998
	Diploma in Welfare Studies	2001
	Diploma Social Work	2003

(b) Experience Is a qualified and registered Social Worker with 6 years post qualifying experience and was appointed to her current post in 2004. Has previous experience of working in a child care team. Prior to qualifying has 6 years experience of working in the social care field.

Resolutions Supervising Social Worker (3) (Part Time)

This post is currently vacant

Resolutions Business Support

- (a) **Qualifications**
- | | |
|---|------|
| Certificate of Education | 1976 |
| Certificate of Bilingual Education | 1976 |
| Playgroup Leader, Mudiad Ysgolion Methrin | 1987 |
| NVQ Level 2 Business Administration | 1998 |
| NVQ Level 3 Business Administration | 2006 |
- (b) **Experience**
- Appointed to her current post in 2002. Has 16 years experience of working in the administrative field and customer services. Also has experience as a volunteer in educational settings, as a play group leader and is a qualified teacher.

The Qualifications and experience of the Family Link Service

The 2 Supervising Social Workers who work with the Family Link Service are now under the management of the Disabled Childrens Team. The workers moved their geographical office to join the Disabled Childrens team in July 2006.

The qualifications and experience of the Family Link Scheme

The Family Link Scheme consists of the following staff

- 2 supervising social workers

Wendy Wilcox Team Manager for the Disabled Children's Service provides the line management for Family Link

- (a) **Qualifications**
- | | |
|--|------|
| Diploma in Social Work | 1995 |
| Diploma in Higher Education | 1995 |
| BA (Hons) Community Studies (Social Work) | 1996 |
| University of Wales Certificate in Counselling | 1998 |
| Post Qualifying Award in Social Work Part 1 | 2003 |

Currently undertaking NVQ Level 4 in Management

- (b) **Experience**
- Fifteen years post qualifying experience and five years as a social worker in Child and Family and Children's Disability fields. Senior Practitioner experience as an Independent Reviewing Officer and Child Protection

Chair Person for three years and two years experience as a Team Manager in Conference and Review Service. Two years experience with a voluntary body as Assistant Director with responsibility for Pan Wales, Adoption and Fostering Services.

Appointed in 2007 to the Team Manager post Disabled Children's Team. From December 2009 has assumed line management responsibility for the Family Link Service.

Supervising Social Worker (1) - Vacancy

a) Qualifications

(b) Experience

Supervising Social Worker (2)

(a) Qualifications Diploma in Social Work 1995
Diploma in Welfare Studies 1992
Certificate in Welfare Studies 1991

(b) Experience Supervising Social Worker – Family Link Service is qualified and registered social worker with 14 years post qualifying experience in childcare including, child protection, children with disabilities and family link services. Prior to qualifying worked as a family aide and family care worker.

6. Procedures and Processes

6.1 Recruitment

- Existing foster carers continue to be among the best source of recruitment and so the individual Fostering Service teams endeavour to work with all carers to ensure that they are enthusiastic ambassadors for Bridgend's fostering service.
- Publicity and promotion of foster care to attract new foster carers has been given significant investment with the launch of the Fostering Recruitment Project and a phased marketing strategy. A dedicated fostering recruitment marketing officer post further strengthened the work with a successful appointment. A distinctive profile with associated paperwork and advertising materials is now in place, ongoing media and promotional advertisement is proving beneficial. The dedicated Marketing Officer post was filled in October 2009 and that individual works closely with the Recruitment Project Manager to furnish the Service with distinct recruitment direction and leadership.

- Other Directorates of the Authority have committed to assist in recruitment activities. Radio and newspaper promotions are in place with an annual programme developing increased coverage at targeted points in the calendar.
- The process for managing foster carer enquiries has been reviewed and from 1/12/08 is entered onto the DRAIG computer database.
- We aim to offer prospective carers contacting the service with information about foster care within 24 hours of contacting the service.
- Enquirers are contacted within a further 10 working days to ensure they have adequate information to decide whether they wish to pursue an application to become a foster carer.
- All enquirers are invited to attend monthly 'Meet and Greet' events hosted by staff from all 3 fostering services.
- Prospective carers who wish to have further information, on receipt of their registration of interest form, are allocated for an initial visit. The purpose of this visit, undertaken by a supervising social worker is to give more detail on the process of becoming a carer and make a recommendation whether to proceed to a Form F assessment.
- Applicants are allocated to an assessing social worker for a Form F assessment and to an experienced foster carer for additional advice and information. It is proposed that, where appropriate, a supervising social worker will also be appointed who will make 2-3 visits to the applicants during their assessment to ensure that there is a relationship established for the future and that they are well informed as to the foster care task.

6.2 Assessment and Approval

- An assessment will be undertaken of the applicants' suitability to care for other people's children. This will take the form of home visits by a Social Worker, training, and work completed by the applicants to explore personal histories, relationships within the families, attitudes and values and whether the applicants have the skills and attributes indicating the potential to meet the nationally-agreed core competencies.
- Applicants will undertake Skills to Foster Preparation training during, and as a part of, the assessment process.
- Full statutory checks, medical assessments, employment and personal references are undertaken on all applicants, and CRB checks on any other adult in the household, or significant regular visitor, over the age of 16 years. Assessment of home conditions will also be undertaken. A Smoking

Policy is drafted and will be ratified by the Authority shortly. The Smoking Policy is in line with that of the South Wales Adoption Agencies Consortium (SWAAC) and has been amended simply to reflect foster carers' responsibilities in Bridgend. Applications from those who smoke are not progressed for children under 5 years. Potential carers for children over 5 years will be considered if there is a commitment from the applicants to cessation.

- Assessments are undertaken in accordance with Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and are completed using BAAF Assessment forms updated in October 2009.
- All assessments are considered by Bridgend Fostering Panel, which makes recommendations to the Head of Service (Safeguarding & Family Support) on approval and the terms of their approval.

6.3 Training and support

- All foster carers are supervised by a supervising social worker on a regular basis and this is recorded on a monthly supervision visit form. The content of this form enables a robust supervision process compliant with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. Carers are required to sign these records, agree an action plan and retain their own copy.
- The training and development needs of each approved foster carer are discussed and considered in the monthly supervision visit. Training and development needs are recorded by the supervising social worker, course nominations made and linked to the action plans from monthly supervision and the foster carer's annual review. All carers have their own training portfolio for which they are responsible, this is reviewed on a not less than 3 monthly basis during supervision. There is a core post approval training programme currently of eight components which carers are expected to complete during a two year period.
- Progress in skill development, confirmed through annual review, will enable foster carers to access fee payments via the undertaking and successful completion of the NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care.
- Foster carers are offered other training as appropriate to their knowledge, skills and developmental needs.
- Online training is now able to be provided to carers facing specific circumstances.
- Safer Caring Policies & Health & Safety checks are regularly reviewed; relevant issues are considered in carers' monthly supervision with a thorough review at every new placement, or through the annual review process. In line with legislation there is consultation with approved carers who currently smoke to consider their responses to manage the implications. Advice leaflets for adults and young people, a fact sheet and

handbook guidance has been drawn up and will be distributed shortly to all carers with other additions to the Carers Handbook. An action plan outlining the individual approaches is drawn up & records of the habit gathered & monitored through supervision.

- All general and relative foster carers in Bridgend Foster Care have an allocated Level 4 foster carer who is an experienced foster carer who takes on this responsibility in addition to their own foster caring. These Level 4 carers maintain a regular link with each of their carers as needed and appropriate. The Level 4 carers are supervised in their role by the Senior Practitioner on a 6 weekly basis.
- Outside office hours foster carers can access the Authority's Emergency Duty Team or their Level 4 foster carer.
- Foster carers receive and contribute to a Newsletter which provides information about the Service, its developments and issues. The Newsletter was distributed bi-monthly for several months but it is now proposed to reduce its frequency to quarterly.
- Foster carers may access the Looked After Children Educational worker for advice and support to ensure children's educational achievements are maximised.
- Foster carers may access the Looked After Children Health Visitor for advice on the health of looked after children.
- Foster Carers may access the Special Needs Advisory Project (SNAP) for advice on special needs matters.
- Foster carers who require respite on a planned basis can access respite services with approved family members or other foster carers. Respite with other carers is a limited service and carers are encouraged if at all possible to use family members who are familiar to a child.
- Foster carers with children over 8 years may access direct support from the Family Support Service whose support is provided to ensure placement stability.
- Foster carers will be paid child allowances at the Fostering Network rate, and limited additional discretionary payments. They will be eligible for fee payments, subject to satisfactory annual review, demonstrated skills and acceptance of additional responsibilities.
- All placements have a placement agreement and a safe caring agreement in place at the time of, or prior to placement for each child being placed.

6.4 Review

All carers are reviewed annually and their continued registration is considered by the Fostering Panel or Principal Officer, which makes recommendations to the Head of Service. The review format and process has been significantly updated which includes consultation documents for relevant parties. This format was piloted by Bridgend Foster Care Team and the conclusion has been that this is not proving wholly successful and therefore the annual review forms and content are again being reviewed.

7. Quality Assurance

The Fostering Service is committed to providing a high quality service. To do so, it employs a number of processes:

- Carers' reviews being considered at least every 3 years by a Panel, consisting of independent elements
- Carers' reviews being considered in other years by a Principal Officer
- Carers' files being audited at least annually by the Team Manager or Senior Practitioner
- Sample files being audited by the Principal Officer or other officers as part of a wider audit of services
- Supervising Social Workers and Support Workers receiving monthly supervision
- Administrative staff receiving supervision two monthly
- Staff receiving annual appraisals
- Individual training plans for staff and carers and access to a training programme, including post qualifying training for Social Workers and NVQ level 3 in Care for foster carers
- A Complaints and Representation Procedure for foster carers and children
- Consultative events with foster carers- e.g. consideration of methods of information sharing- business meetings/ letters/ fliers.
- A quality assurance is now included in the work of the Foster Panel and gathers responses from all parties who contribute to the process.
- Supervisory visit forms are routinely signed off by one of the Senior Practitioners or the Team Manager.

8. Summary of Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure requires staff to attempt to resolve complaints informally, whenever appropriate. However, when complaints need to be dealt with formally there is clear policy, procedural and guidance information available. Where policies and procedures need to be amended in response to the outcome of complaints, mechanisms are in place to highlight specific areas for change.

The Fostering Service fully adheres to and complies with Bridgend County Borough Council's Representations and Complaints Procedure - Section 24d & 26 of the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Social Services Act (Complaints Procedure) 1970. [Liaison with the nominated Complaints Officer 01656 642253]

9. Address and Telephone Number of the Appropriate Officer for National Assembly

CSSIW
South West Wales Regional Office
Unit C, Phase 3,
Tawe Business Village
Phoenix Way
Swansea Enterprise Park
Swansea
SA& 9LA

Tel. 01792 310420

10. Address, Telephone number and email for Children's Commissioner's

Children's Commissioner for Wales
Oystermouth House,
Charter Court,
Phoenix Way,
Llansamlet,
Swansea.
SA7 9FS

post@childcomwales.org.uk

Tel: 01792 765600

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