

Statement of Purpose:

Bridgend Foster Care 2020/21

Contents

1. Introduction
2. About Bridgend Foster Care
3. About the service provided
4. How the service is provided
5. Staffing arrangements
6. Governance and quality monitoring arrangements
7. Facilities and services

1. Introduction

This statement has been produced in accordance with The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 and is referred to as “the Statement of Purpose”. Part 2 and Schedule 1 of The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 and accompanying Code of Practice detail the requirements for the contents and review of the Statement of Purpose.

This Statement of Purpose provides information about Bridgend’s Fostering Services which are provided through Bridgend Foster Care and the Placement Team. It gives an outline of the aims and objectives of the Services and some of their key features. The Statement of Purpose is available via the Bridgend Foster Care Website and accessible in print on request.

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 the ongoing 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 and other stakeholders. The outcomes of consultation throughout the year will be considered and a revised Statement of Purpose is in place from April 1st each year.

Aims

Bridgend Foster Care and associated schemes aim 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 harm or abuse and neglect.

To ensure that children benefit from education opportunities, health and social care.

To ensure that the services provided are flexible, responsive and supportive to 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 being considered for or receiving a foster service placement.

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 and delivering services.

To use Support Care to prevent children and families being separated and children becoming looked after.

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 offer local parent and child placements thus promoting parents and their children to remain within their communities where appropriate.

To offer children and young people high quality care through therapeutic parenting.

To increase the numbers of Bridgend County Borough Council approved foster carers who are approved by this local authority to provide more placement choice.

To promote continuity of existing health and education arrangements.

To match children with suitable foster carers.

To provide local placements to enable children to remain within their communities where appropriate.

2. About Bridgend Foster Care

Bridgend Foster Care is a community based local authority fostering service situated in Bridgend Town Centre within Civic Offices. Bridgend local authority is part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.

The Address of the Service is:

Bridgend Foster Care
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Bridgend Foster Care Team comprises of a Fostering and Placement Team.

The Registered Manager for the Fostering Service is Joanna Lloyd Jones and the Interim Team Manager for the Placement Team is Alex Davies.

Steven Howell is the Group Manager for Placements and Provider Services who oversees both services and line manages Mrs Lloyd Jones and Miss Davies.

The Agency Decision Maker and Responsible Individual is Laura Kinsey, Head of Children's Social Care.

3. About the Service Provided

Placements

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 to 18 years of age:

- **Emergency, respite and short term care:** Providing care for a few days, weeks or months while plans are being made for the child's long term future.
- **Long-term care:** Where foster carers provide permanent care for a child up to, and into, adult independence where adoption is not an option.
- **Kinship care:** Care by friends or family members who are approved as foster carers.
- **Reg.26 care:** Immediate placement of a child with relatives or friends under Regulation 26 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations (Wales 2015).
- **Private Fostering:** Private fostering is when a child under 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by an adult who is not a close relative i.e. brother/sister, aunt/uncle, grandparent, a full or half relation, a step parent or related by marriage. It is an arrangement between the parent and a carer. The Fostering service offers support to private foster carers; currently we do not have any private foster carers in Bridgend and there is information available on the Bridgend Fostering website.
- **The Family Link Scheme:** The short breaks service 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.

- **Parent and Child Placements:** Short term assessment of parents to provide safe parenting to their baby whilst living in a foster placement

Aims:

- To support parents and children to be placed together while an assessment is undertaken.
- To provide a “step down” service to parents moving from assessment into the community.
- The child/young person remains in their own community.
- Increased opportunities for families to remain in their locality.
- Local placements enable parents to maintain extended familial links and access local support services including education or training.
- Social work staff will have greater time to spend assessing and supporting the families as their placement will be in the local area.

- **Transitional Carers:** The Transitional Carer scheme will offer placements to children and young people with a variety of complex needs and challenging behaviours that require an intensive and holistic package of support from an experienced and knowledgeable carer household. Placements will be made for up to 24 weeks, during which time the carer will build a one-to-one relationship with the young person, showing commitment, patience and dedication to help them to overcome barriers that may have led to the breakdown of placements in the past.

The overall aim of the Transitional Carer scheme will be to move the young person on into a successful, long-term placement that aligns with their needs and ambitions. This could be a move into a long term fostering placement, returning to birth family or on to an independent living environment.

- **Permanence Team** – The Permanence Team have joined Bridgend Foster Care and undertake Special Guardianship assessments and provide support to Special Guardians. As good practice they attend team meetings and staff development days.

Services available to children of foster carers

- Access to special events
- Provision of a children's support group

Services available to Prospective Carers

- Information and advice about fostering – provided through meet and greet information sessions, leaflets, local radio advertising and a dedicated Bridgend Foster Care web-site.
- The recruitment process involves: an initial enquiry received via email or telephone, an information pack is provided to the enquirer with an offer to meet with a member of the team. If the enquirer wishes to proceed, telephone screening takes place before arranging an initial visit to the home which determines whether the application will progress to an assessment.
- Assessment – A qualified social worker from Bridgend Foster Care will visit and explain the compilation and construction of a Form F report to the prospective applicant(s) alongside the approval and submission to Fostering Panel process.

All successful applicants will be offered and are expected to attend a 3 day skills to foster preparation training provided by Bridgend Foster Care staff.

4. How the service is provided

Services available to all Carers

- **Regular supervision** - All foster carers are supervised by a supervising social worker and this is recorded on a supervision visit form. The content of this form enables a robust supervision process compliant with The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 and accompanying Code of Practice. The frequency of supervision is agreed with the foster carer based on their needs and the needs of the child/children within the placement. Additional visits outside of supervision are also arranged in accordance with the support needs of the household.
- **Liaison Carer** – All general and connected person foster carers in their first year of fostering and thereafter have an allocated liaison carer made available to them. The liaison carer is an experienced foster carer who takes on this responsibility in addition to their own foster caring. These liaison carers will maintain a regular link with each of their carers during their first year and can be utilised for information and general queries. The liaison carers are supervised in their role on a 6 weekly basis. There is provision for five appointed liaison foster carers (4 geographically represented, alongside 1 for connected persons) who will be carers who have achieved their QCF and who are experienced carers; the role will give them additional responsibilities to their foster caring. The liaison carers (4 responsible for general foster carers within Bridgend, and 1 for relatives) will all have a caseload of colleague carers whom they support and advise. They can additionally be called to assist with other duties including training, development, consultation, recruitment and activities for foster children.
- There is a formal application, selection and interview process for the position. The liaison carers are responsible for running coffee mornings for foster carers within their designated geographical area and providing them with informal peer support. Liaison carers also provide 1:1 support to carers who are experiencing difficulties which could relate to complex placements, or experiencing an allegation. The Liaison carers will also feedback to the team about what is going well and what can be improved with regard to service provision based on their support to the carers.
- In addition the liaison carers support the delivery of Skills to Foster Training and attend recruitment events which take place throughout the year. The liaison carers receive an additional fee for this service as well as expenses for

attending events and meetings related to the role. The role is subject to probation and review.

- Outside office hours foster carers can access the Authority's Emergency Duty Team or their Liaison foster carer. The emergency duty team have a senior member of the staff team available to them by telephone on a 24 hour basis, when necessary.
- **Placement Support Worker** – All carers have access to the Placement Support Worker who has 3 specific job areas:
 - Supporting carers through complaints or allegations
 - Supporting carers to manage challenging behaviour aimed to prevent placement disruption
 - Assisting and supporting carers who are moving children on to adoptive placements.
- **Reunification Support Workers** – provide support to carers and children who are looked after in the following areas:
 - Support for children transitioning from out of county and residential placements
 - Support to promote placement stability
 - Support to facilitate plans for children who are looked after to safely return to their families.
 - Provision of out of hours support including weekends
- **Newsletter** – Foster carers receive and have the opportunity to contribute to a newsletter which provides information about the service, its developments and issues. The newsletter is distributed quarterly. The Bridgend Fostering website is being updated and consideration is being given to developing a section for foster carers to have their own forum.
- **Respite** – 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.
- **Allowances** – Foster carers are paid child allowances at the Welsh Government rate as a minimum and additional discretionary payments. They will be eligible for fee payments, subject to satisfactory annual review, demonstrated skills and acceptance of additional responsibilities.
- **Handbook** – Every foster carer is provided with a handbook about the service and explanation of the policies in place in accordance with the Local Authority

Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018. The handbook is available via the Bridgend Fostering Team website and is available in Welsh.

- **Children's Guide** – Every child within a Bridgend Fostering Team placement is also provided with a children's guide to the service. The Team are also looking to develop this being available in the form of an App.
- All Carers are also provided with the following:
 - Allocated Social Worker
 - Access to health advice from a looked after children's nurse
 - Annual Review
 - Individual Training and Development Plan, training Programme
 - Access to QCF (Qualification and Credit Framework) level 3
 - Out of hours support – by Emergency Duty Team providing crisis intervention
 - Information Consultation Event 2 times per year
 - Foster Carer Agreement
 - Facilitated Support Groups for the child/ren of carers.
 - Maintenance and discretionary payments, access to fee payments in addition to the basic fostering allowances.
 - Individual membership for all fostering households to the Fostering Network
 - Support Groups co-ordinated by liaison carers; drop in sessions for informal support and training.
 - Access to training to support children with specific complex needs
 - Provision of discount cards to enable foster carers to access community activities at a reduced rate.

Accommodation and Permanence Panel

In circumstances where the needs of the child require specialist advice and support for foster carers the child's SW and supervising social worker can make an application to accommodation and permanence panel for consideration.

Procedures and Processes

Bridgend Foster Care believes that every child is important and that the needs, well-being and best interests of children and young people are paramount. We believe that:

- Each individual has an inherent right to develop their potential, regardless of previous life experiences.

- Children & young people have a right to be looked after by adults who offer respect, concern and affection.
- Children & young people have the right to achieve the best possible outcomes, in line with the Welsh Government's seven core aims for children and young people.
- Young people should be suitably prepared for leaving care: leaving their Foster care placement with savings, educational attainment to support their chosen career and suitable skills for independence.
- All staff, Foster Carers and other adults who come into contact with children through Bridgend Fostering are subject to rigorous checks and vetting procedures.

In addition, Bridgend Foster Care will:

- Comply with all the relevant legislation and strive to exceed the National Minimum Standards at all times.
- Ensure the rights of children are promoted in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child.
- Ensure child protection procedures are followed robustly at all times to ensure children and young people are safeguarded.
- Work in partnership with the Children's Social Worker to identify the individual needs and identified outcomes of the child and then deliver that care.
- Ensure that Foster Carers do not use corporal punishment, are skilled in behavioural management and do not do anything that demeans, degrades or humiliates the young person in their care.
- Ensure equality & Diversity is promoted at all times, through recruitment, assessment, matching and placement support.

Recruitment

- Existing foster carers continue to be among the best source of recruitment and so the individual Fostering Service staff endeavour to work with all carers to ensure that they are enthusiastic ambassadors for Bridgend's fostering service.
- South Wales Improvement Consortium (SWIC) have worked together to provide a best practice recruitment model, this has formed the basis for BCBC recruitment. However, the process has been reviewed and streamlined in order to ensure that there is no delay for the applicant.
- Bridgend Local Authority is also working with the National Fostering Framework in relation to a national fostering recruitment campaign known as 'Foster Wales'.
- Publicity and promotion of foster care to attract new foster carers continues to be invested in and monitored utilising specific and phased targeted marketing strategies, launched throughout the year. A dedicated Development Officer post coordinates, drives forward and reviews this activity.
- A distinctive brand with associated paperwork and advertising materials is used across all fostering services, ongoing media and promotional advertisement is proving beneficial and is being expanded to include support of local teams and services. A named local authority Marketing Officer works in close partnership with the Development Officer to enhance and further promote the Service with distinct recruitment direction and leadership.
- Distinct branded paperwork is available for each scheme within the fostering service i.e. Family link, transitional carers and Parent and Child placements. This material enables us to target our recruitment to each in accordance with the needs of the service.
- 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 continues to be entered onto the WCCIS computer database.
- We provide prospective carers information about foster care within 24 working hours of them contacting the service.
- Prospective carers who wish to have further information, on receipt of the information pack, are allocated an initial visit. The purpose of this visit, undertaken by an assessing social worker, is to give more detail about the process of becoming a foster carer and to enable the assessing Social worker to make a recommendation to put before a Senior Member of the team as whether to proceed to a Form F assessment.

- If applicants decide to proceed and their initial visit is positive, applicants are allocated to an assessing social worker for a Form F assessment. To avoid delay, applicants are provided with specific individual sections of the Form F to begin filling out whilst their personal checks are carried out as well as being nominated to attend the next available Skills to Foster course.

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 qualified Assessing Social Worker and individual write up 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 as a part of the assessment process; this takes place over 3 days and is a very open and proactive training programme involving lots of discussion and real life scenarios being presented. The Skills to foster programme has been adapted and accordingly amended to make it fit for purpose specifically for relative foster carers.
- Full statutory checks, medical assessments, employment and personal references are undertaken on all applicants, and DBS checks on any other adult in the household, or significant regular visitors, over the age of 18 years. Assessment of home conditions will also be undertaken and a health and safety questionnaire completed; if the home has pets, pet questionnaires are also completed. BCBC has a Smoking Policy which is in line with that of the South Wales Adoption Agencies Consortium (SWAAC) and has been amended 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.
- A process is in place for the referral, allocation and assessment of Connected Persons, created in collaboration with the Safeguarding and legal teams; these assessments are referred to as Connected Persons Assessments. Connected Persons are subject to the same checks as specified above and attend the Skills to Foster programme.
- Form F Assessments are undertaken in accordance with The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018 and are completed using the current BAAF Assessment forms.

- All assessments are considered by Bridgend Fostering Panel, which makes recommendations to the Head of Children's Social Care (Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate) on approval and the terms of their approval.
- Our robust recruitment and assessment processes enable us to achieve the best outcomes for children by ensuring we have a cohort of general carers who are able to provide an excellent standard of care to children and that connected persons carers are supported to enable children to remain with their families wherever possible.

Training

- The training and development needs of each approved foster carer are discussed and considered during their assessments, annual reviews and supervision visits. 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.
- The Fostering Team are implementing the NFF Learning and Development Framework for foster carers which enables learning opportunities to be provided through formal training courses, but also through online learning, peer mentoring, self-learning or through practice learning (eg through one to one work with a therapist in relation to a specific child).
- Progress in skills development, confirmed through annual review, will enable general foster carers to access enhanced fee payments via the successful completion of the Qualification Creditation Framework Level 3.
- Foster carers are offered other training as appropriate to their knowledge, skills, developmental needs and the needs of the children in their care.
- Below are some of the training courses available to our Foster Carers:
 - Skills to Foster
 - Safer Caring (Kinship Carers)
 - Confidence in Care / Fostering Changes
 - Working with Transition (adoption)
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ+)
 - Youth Mental Health
 - Advocacy and Children's Rights

- Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy parenting (PACE)
- Online Safety TBC
- Paediatric First Aid
- Brain, Behaviour, Attachment, Assessment, Resilience 1 ,Resilience 2 & Trauma (BBAARRT)
- Understanding Challenging Behaviour and Promoting Positive Strategies
- Safeguarding
- Substance Misuse
- Safer Caring and Allegations
- County Lines
- Record Keeping

Review

- All foster carers approvals and agreements are reviewed annually and their continued registration is considered by the Fostering Panel after their first year of approval and every 3 years thereafter unless there has been a significant change within the household, a significant incident such as an allegation or a request for a change of approval. The recommendations of Foster Panel are ratified by the Head of Children's Social Care.
- Annual Reviews completed outside of Panel arrangements are quality assured by a Senior Practitioner within the Fostering Team and approved by a Team Manager.
- The views, wishes and feelings of children in placement and their parents are sought as part of every annual review and where not able to be obtained the reasons are recorded
- The views of any agencies involved with supporting the child/ children in placement are sought within every annual review.
- The Fostering Team facilitates consultation events with children and young people on a regular basis to obtain their views outside of Annual Reviews

Standards of care and support

- In order to support carers and the children in placement to be as physically, mentally and emotionally healthy as possible Bridgend Fostering Team provide every fostering household with HALO membership cards which enables every household member to access a variety of free leisure activities including local gyms.

- Supervising social workers ensure that all placed children are registered with a GP, dentist and optician as appropriate within statutory guidelines.
- All children who are looked after undergo regular health assessments via the looked after children health service which is monitored within their regular looked after child reviews.
- Foster Carers are provided with individual Safe Care, Placement Plan and Essential Information Record for every child and young person within the fostering household at the point of placement. This, alongside Placement Planning Meetings, ensure that the foster carer has the appropriate knowledge of the child's individual needs and circumstances to support them.
- The above documents contain the detail of each child's care plan and the services from which the child accesses support in accordance with their needs. This includes any language, communication or cultural needs.
- Safer Caring agreements & Health & Safety checks are regularly reviewed at least annually; relevant issues are considered in carers' supervision with a thorough review at every new placement, or through the annual review process. In line with legislation, there is ongoing consultation with approved carers who currently smoke, to consider their responses to and manage the implications of their smoking. An action plan outlining the individual approaches is drawn up and records of the habit are gathered and in turn monitored through supervision.
- Each foster carer is provided with a Max discount card which enables them to access various activities within the community at a discounted rate, which better enables participation in hobbies and interests.
- The local authority is committed to ensuring that foster carers have the appropriate equipment to support children in placement:
 - Each child must have their own bed
 - Appropriate stair gates, pushchairs/ prams, car seats, monitors, bed guards and cots for all placements of babies and young children.
 - Emergency clothing grants, uniform grants, suitcases and small personal items to children who are accommodated without these basic articles.
 - Support for carers to acquire necessary items for children who have additional needs including, but not limited to, pressure mats, alarms, mobility aids, home adaptations, hearing aids. Such decisions are made on a case by case basis.

- The foster carer handbook contains detail of the expectations of foster carers, guidance and advice available for foster carers supporting children and young people and avenues of support available. These include but are not limited to:-
 - The active offer of advocacy
 - Ensuring children are able to exercise choice and control in their placements
 - Supporting contact
 - Promoting independence skills
 - Managing challenging behaviours.

- Foster carers are able to access the support of the vulnerable groups service who provide additional support and guidance to children who are looked after to access education.

- Training is provided to all foster carers to assist them to support children's needs in relation to their gender identity and sexual orientation. Where children have specific needs related to these issues for which carers need support, the placement support worker can provide advice on a 1:1 basis. There may be children or young people who may benefit from support from external organisations, these needs are addressed on a case by case basis.

Language and communication needs for people using the service

- Bridgend Fostering Team ensure that phone calls are answered bilingually and that potential carers accessing the service are actively offered services in Welsh.

- Where children have language or communication needs, these are addressed on a case by case basis. Where possible children are matched with a carer who already has the language, skills or required training to enable them to communicate with the child in accordance with their preference. Where no such carer is available, the local authority is committed to supporting the carer to either learn the skills required or use alternative means of communication that may be available.

- The Foster Carer's handbook is available in Welsh.

- Where children have cultural or religious needs, these are also addressed on a case by case basis. Where possible children are matched with a carer with prior knowledge and ability to meet the individual child's needs. Where no such carer is available the local authority is committed to supporting the carer to obtain the appropriate knowledge to meet the child's needs, to access community support to meet the child's needs or to link with a suitable, knowledgeable person to support them with these skills. Where possible the foster carer will link with the child's family to better support the child to continue to their observances in the way they are comfortable and accustomed. Deference will always be given to the child or young persons stated preference in accordance with their age and level of development.

5. Staffing arrangements

Bridgend Foster Care Team consists of the following staff:

- **1 Team Manager**

The Manager was appointed in July 2015 and is responsible for the management and supervision of Bridgend Foster Care Team. The Manager is the Registered Fostering Services Manager for BCBC. The Team Manager holds a Diploma in Social Work and the Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care

- **2 Senior Practitioner posts**

1 of the Senior Practitioners is currently the Interim Team Manager of the Placements Team.

Both Senior Practitioners hold a relevant Social Work Qualification and are registered with Social Care Wales.

In addition one of the Senior Practitioners has achieved the Enabling Practice (Masters Level 7) qualification.

- **15 Supervising / Assessing Social Workers**

All of the Social Workers in the Team hold a relevant Social Work Qualification and are registered with Social Care Wales.

- **1.5 FTE placement support workers**

Both hold the NVQ Level 3 Health & Social Care: Children & Young People

- **1 Development Officer (vacant; currently being advertised)**

Bridgend Placement Team consists of the following staff:

1 x Team Manager:

The Manager was appointed in December 2019 and is responsible for the management and supervision of Bridgend Placement Team. The Manager holds a Masters Social Work and Enabling Practice (Masters Level 7) Qualification.

1 x Assessing/Supervising Social Worker (4 days a week)

The Social Worker within the Placement Team has oversight of the Supported Lodgings Scheme and When I'm Ready Service, holds a relevant Social Work Qualification and is registered with Social Care Wales.

4 x Reunification Workers (fulltime)

The re-unification workers hold a variety of qualifications such as:

- Registered behaviour technician (RBT) in applied behaviour analysis (ABA)
- Higher education Certificate in Social Work
- BA Hons Education
- BA Hons. Foundation Youth and Community Work

1 x Placement Coordination and Commissioning Officer (full time)

2 x Placement Support Officers (part time)

Supervision Arrangements

All Support Workers and Social Workers are supervised on a 4-6 weekly basis by their line manager in accordance with BCBC Supervision Policy

Senior Social Worker and Team Managers are supervised on a 4 weekly basis.

6. Governance and Quality Monitoring Arrangements

Oversight of the Responsible Individual

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM)/RI for Bridgend Foster Care is the Head of Children's Social Care. They maintain oversight of the service via:-

- Regular supervision of the Group Manager with strategic and operational responsibility of placements and provider Services.
- The Group Manager supervises the Team Managers of the Fostering and Placement Service and chairs Accommodation and Permanence Panel.
- The Group Manager and ADM receive regular reports from the Fostering and Placement Service on at least a quarterly basis, an annual report is also completed in accordance with the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 and accompanying Code of Practice.
- The ADM is co-located with the fostering service and regularly completes informal visits to the service.
- Chairing Out of Authority Panel where decisions are made regarding children who need to be placed outside of BCBC.
- Undertaking the ratification of Foster Panel.
- Attending ICE Meetings.
- Chairing regular Extended Team Manager Meetings with all operational managers within Children's Social Care.
- Attendance at regular meetings with other Local Authority Heads of Service.
- Attendance at regular meetings for Heads of Service regarding the NFF.
- The Group Manager and ADM are provided with a Statement of Purpose for the Fostering and Placement Service updated at least annually.

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 wherever possible and at least every 3 years by a Panel, consisting of independent members.
- Carers' reviews being considered yearly by a Bridgend Foster Care Team Manager.
- Unannounced visits take place to foster placements at least annually.
- Carers' files are routinely audited by the case responsible worker and then verified by Team Manager or senior member of the team. Sample files are routinely audited by the senior members within the team as part of the internal auditing process.
- Sample files may be audited by the Group Manager or other officers as part of a wider audit of services.
- Staff receive annual appraisals which may also be reviewed at the 6 month stage.
- Individual training plans for staff and carers and access to a training programme, including post qualifying training for Social Workers and QCF level 3 in Health and Social Care for foster carers, strengthened by a comprehensive training needs analysis being completed annually.
- A Complaints and Representation Procedure is available and outlined within the handbooks for foster carers and children which includes information about advocacy.
- When Consultation events take place the events are minuted and these are distributed to the whole Bridgend foster carer population.
- Foster carers are required to attend Information Consultation Events (ICE) as part of their Foster Carer Agreement. These events are held twice a year.
- A quality assurance exercise continues in respect of the Fostering Panel and this gathers responses from all parties who contribute to the process, with an annual report being provided to the Head of Service and panel Advisor.

Staff Training

All members of staff within Bridgend Foster Care receive an induction in accordance with BCBC's Corporate Induction Framework. The following mandatory e-learning modules are completed on the first day of employment:

- **Corporate E-Induction Module** This is designed to provide an overview of the Council. It will provide the new starter with an understanding of the Council's priorities.
- **ICT Code of Conduct E-learning module** If the new starter has IT access as part of the role the ICT Code of Conduct e-learning module is mandatory. This provides a summary of the ICT Code of Conduct, "six simple rules" which all employees are required to complete. Additionally, breach of the code will lead to disciplinary procedures being invoked.
- **Display Screen Equipment (DSE) E-learning module** This mandatory module for employees with IT access, promotes measures to minimise risk to health, safety and welfare of employees working with IT equipment.
- **GDPR and Data Protection E-learning module** This is a mandatory module for employees with access to personal data. It provides a summary of the employees' responsibilities for ensuring that any personal data that they have access to is kept securely and not disclosed incorrectly.
- **Safeguarding Children & Adults - Raising Awareness E-Learning Module** This mandatory module is to raise employees' awareness of their role in safeguarding children and young people and adults at risk.
- **Fire Safety Awareness E-Learning Module** This mandatory module is designed to give you an overview of good fire safety practices at work.
- **Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence E-Learning Module** This mandatory module meets the requirements of group 1 of the National Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Corporate Induction Record provides a checklist to ensure that relevant information is provided and discussed as part of a members of staff's work place induction. The induction process as a whole incorporates the employee becoming familiar with the organisation, their directorate and their role within this.

Staff within Bridgend Foster Care have access to the Foster Carer Training Programme alongside our Foster Carers and staff members deliver the Skills to Foster Training programme to prospective carers undergoing assessment.

In addition to training available via Bridgend County Borough Council, such as:

- Advanced Assessment and Analysis Meeting the needs of children and young people
- Domestic Abuse
- Wales Safeguarding Procedures - Children Services
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

Staff within Bridgend Foster Care also have the opportunity to undertake training with external providers such as Coram/BAAF and AFA. Staff members have also had the opportunity to undertake DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy) Training. Staff are also encouraged to undertake self-directed learning such as reading relevant case law, journals and emerging research as this becomes available. A member of staff within Bridgend Foster Care has access to Community Care Inform to facilitate this learning and development.

The individual learning and development needs of staff are discussed within their supervision and appraisals.

Facilities and Services

The Placement Team is based within Maple Tree House, Merthyr Mawr Road Bridgend. The Placement Officers meet with various external providers commissioned by the service. This is to ensure that BCBC are able to maintain placements to meet the needs of children who are looked after within BCBC. The Placement Coordinating and Commissioning Officer also undertakes quality assurance visits, alongside the child's social worker to any external residential providers.

Records relating to foster carers and children who are looked after are stored on secure computer databases and recording systems. The aim of BCBC is to be paperless, therefore all papers received are scanned to a secure recording system and added to WCCIS before the hard copies are shredded.

Foster Carers in Bridgend are responsible for ensuring records are stored securely within their homes, ideally within a lockable cabinet. This is discussed and monitored within supervision.

Consultation

Foster Carers have regular meetings with the team outside of supervision. At least 2 meetings per year, known as Information Consultation Events (ICE) take place where all foster carers attend to meet with the team. A venue within central Bridgend is booked for these events.

Foster Carers are also able to have meetings with senior staff members on request to discuss any concerns that they may have. A senior staff member is always present at a placement stability or support meeting.

Liaison carers facilitate regular coffee mornings with the foster carers and team members attend a proportion of this for carers to have an opportunity to communicate with the team on an informal basis.

Consultation events with children and young people who are looked after take place at least once per year and have a specific focus, such as development of the children's guide to fostering. In addition to this the children's views of their placement are gathered via regular visits from their allocated social worker, discussions with the supervising social worker during their visits and formally obtained as part of LAC Reviews and Annual Reviews.

The Foster Care Handbook and Children's Guide ensure that children outline the responsibilities of all who have contact with children and young people with regards to the active offer of advocacy.

Children's family members attend LAC Reviews that are completed and members of the team, where appropriate will attend additional meetings with birth families including planning meetings and/or contact review meetings. Birth family feedback is sought as part of every annual review where appropriate. Where feedback is not obtained the reasons are recorded within the review. Senior Team members will meet with birth family members on request.

Consultation with those working with the children (key stakeholders) such as staff from an education setting or support service is achieved via the LAC and Annual Review processes completed by BCBC.

The social workers for the children meet with them alone to obtain their views, wishes and feelings on a regular basis and communicate with the supervising social worker for the carer regarding any queries or concerns.

Training has been provided to local authority staff with regard to ensuring children in receipt of support from the local authority are given an active offer of advocacy. In addition the foster carer handbook details the offer of advocacy and that they as foster carers can make this offer/ referral for support.

Children placed within local authority foster care are provided with children's guides to fostering which includes information about advocacy and how to communicate any issues they may have, including how to make a complaint.

Bridgend Foster Care arranges consultation events for the children and young people using the service on a regular basis.

The resident children of foster carers are able to access their own support groups and engage in activities organised by an allocated team member. The children of foster carers views are sought within supervision visits to the placement as well as formally sought within the foster carers annual reviews.

Foster Carers are consulted about their views within:

- their individual supervisions,
- their annual reviews,
- LAC Reviews
- regular ICE meetings
- formal training events
- support groups and coffee mornings facilitated by the Liaison Carers
- attendance at Foster Panel

As well as the opportunity for formal feedback to be given within the LAC and Annual Reviews, the children's social worker also has the opportunity to feedback about the service to their manager within their own supervision, informal discussion with members of the fostering team, when attending accommodation and permanence panel and when members of the fostering team attend the various team meetings of each safeguarding team.

Fostering Team Managers attend weekly Team Managers Meetings during which the managers are able to provide the feedback from their own teams about the service.

Fostering Panel Members are able to give feedback on the service via their appraisals, via the panel chair or directly to the panel advisor. An annual report is completed by the Panel Chair including panel views and recommendations.

The Fostering Team are consulted on the service within their individual supervisions, and team meetings. The team have an away day at least once per year to share skills and knowledge with one another and focus on team development.

Team meetings take place once per month.

Formal Individual supervisions are undertaken on a 4 weekly basis with the staff members' line manager. Informal supervision and support from senior members of

staff is provided either upon the request of the worker or offered where a staff member is supervising a complex case or has additional support needs.

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.

All carers and children in placement are provided with guidance and a copy of the complaints procedure and if they request forms or information at any other time these can be provided immediately.

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]

Address and Telephone Number of the Appropriate Officer for National Assembly:

CIW
South West Wales Region
Government Buildings
Picton Terrace
Carmarthen
SA31 3BT
Telephone: 01267 245160
Fax: 01267 245140

Address, Telephone number and email for Children's Commissioner

Children's Commissioner for Wales
Oystermouth House
Charter Court,
Phoenix Way,
Llansamlet,
Swansea.
SA7 9FS
post@childcomwales.org.uk
Tel: 01792 765600

