

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOSTERING SERVICES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Social Services
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Tel: 642674

(Last reviewed June 2015)

This Statement of Purpose for

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOSTERING SERVICES

has been approved by the

Responsible Individual
Colin Turner

Signed:

Date:

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 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 upon request to Foster Carers approved by Bridgend CBC and to applicants beginning an assessment to become a foster carer. It can be made available to social workers considering making a placement with any of the services in paper format and electronic copies are available on the intranet at office bases. It will be made available upon request to parents, children and young people. However, the Children’s Guide will contain a summary of the content and it is anticipated, 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 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 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 Registered Fostering Services Manager is the Team Manager for Bridgend Foster Care, she is the operational manager for Fostering Services and she reports to the Head of Service (ordinarily reporting to the Group Manager Regulated Services) –she is **Natalie Silcox**.
- The Group Manager – Regulated Services is a third tier officer – she is **Natalie Silcox**.
- The Head of Safeguarding & Family Support is a second tier officer – he is **Colin Turner**.
- The Director of the Social Services and Well Being Directorate is the **Corporate Director- Sue Cooper**.

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 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 Regulations (Wales) 2003
- Support Care – Preventative service aimed at supporting families, children and young people and preventing children needing to become Looked After
- Short break care – respite care for children to support them in the community or with other foster carers
- Emergency bed provision
- Dedicated Private Fostering Officer
- Placement Support Worker
- The Family Link Scheme

- Private Fostering

Services to children of foster carers

- Access to special events
- Provision of a children's support group
- Recognition of sons and daughters group and work

Services to Prospective Carers

- Information and advice about fostering – provided through monthly meet and greet information sessions, leaflets, local radio advertising and the BCBC web-site. The process involves a telephone response, information pack being distributed, an invitation to a meet and greet event, following which an initial visit to the home will determine any application proceeding.
- 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 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. We now offer bespoke skills to foster preparation training to relative foster carers.
- Prospective Support Care service carers will be assessed by the Support Care service social worker
- Prospective Family Link carers will be assessed by a social worker from within Bridgend Foster Care

Services to Carers

- Support and supervision not less than 6 weekly, up to 10 weekly in specific relative cases.
- Placement support worker with 3 specific job areas
 1. Supporting carers though complaints or allegations
 2. Supporting carers to manage challenging behaviour aimed to prevent placement disruption
 3. Assisting and supporting carers who are moving children on to adoptive placements.
- Identified support service from an experienced foster care colleague (Liaison carer)
- Annual Review

- Individual Training and Development Plan, training Programme
- Provision of written guidance – foster carer handbook
- Access to QCF (Qualification Creditation Framework) level 4
- Access to appropriate respite care
- Out of hours support – by Emergency Duty Team
- Information Consultation Event 2 times per year
- Foster Carer Agreement
- Facilitated Support Groups; relative and Reg.38, men who care, child/ren of carers.
- Maintenance and discretionary payments, access to fee payments
- Individual membership for all fostering households of Fostering Network
- Facilitated local branch of Foster Care Association
- Quarterly newsletter to which carers can contribute

Financial arrangements

The payments scheme is based on payment for skills for general foster carers relating to the development and achievement of QCF and continued successful fostering provision.

There is provision for five appointed Liaison foster carers who will be carers who have achieved their QCF at least 3 years previously and who are experienced carers; the role will give them additional responsibilities to their foster caring. The liaison carers (3 responsible for individual geographical areas within Bridgend, 1 for relatives and 1 for Reg. 38 carers) will all have a caseload of colleague carers whom they support and advise; in their first year and whilst undertaking the QCF award.

They can additionally be called to assist with other duties including training, development, consultation, recruitment and activities for foster children.

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

Age	Fostering Allowances
0-4	153.00
5-10	142.49
11-15	177.38
16-17	224.37

In addition, eligible general 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
Age	Fee	Fee
	£	£
0-4	74.48	148.88
5-10	74.48	148.88
11-15	94.77	189.61
16-17	94.77	189.61

There will be a flat fee of £90 per week paid to liaison carers

The criteria for each Level relate to:

Level 2

Satisfactory annual review; maximum provision of placements, full approval and meeting of foster carer competencies to general foster care level, unless offering general foster placements and meeting the competencies, relative carers will not be eligible for QCF registration.

Registration for QCF

Level of skill/responsibility

Level 3

Possession of QCF, maximum provision of placements, full approval and meeting of foster carer competencies to general foster care level and provision of general placements

Level of skill and additional responsibilities

Liaison carer

Application, selection and interview process

Additional responsibilities as per person specification

Additional payments consist of mileage expenses at the HMRC rate, initial clothing and change of school uniform allowances at the Team Managers discretion, and specific (agreed in advance) equipment purchasing.

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.

Current payments to Link carers are:-

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

3. Aims and Objectives of the Fostering Services.

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 increase the numbers of Bridgend County Borough Council approved foster carers who are approved by 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 parent and baby placements.

4. Principles and Standards of Care

The Fostering Service seeks to ensure that its policies, procedures and practice comply with the Fostering Services Regulations (Wales) 2003, the UK National Minimum 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 Services:

- Seek 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 and promotes that background in placement.
- Supports processes that ensure the assessment of a child/ren's needs are matched, where possible, with foster carers with the skills to meet those needs, with continued planning, review and support of a child/ren's plan
- 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
- Enable carers to work in partnership with the Local Authority, external agencies and the children in placement by offering a placement support service in identified problem areas.
- To provide a Support Care service whose primary aim is to offer a preventive service thereby enabling families in the locality to remain together.

5. The Qualifications and Experience of Bridgend Foster Care Team

Bridgend Foster Care Team consists of the following staff:

- One Team Manager
- 3 Senior Practitioner posts (Changing to 2 in July 2015)

- 13 Supervising / Assessing Social Workers (3 x p/t). (changing to 14 in July 2015) 2 x 4 days per week
- 1 Supervising social work assistant
- 1 placement support worker PT

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
	Institute of Learning Management level 4	2010

(b) Experience The Manager is a qualified and registered social worker with 4 years post qualifying experience in the childcare field in a generic district team. The Team Manager was a Foster Carer for 6 years and has 7 years experience within the Fostering Service. The manager has previously worked as a senior social work practitioner, in Bridgend Foster Care. The manager has completed the NVQ Level 4 in Management and the ILM level 4.

The Manager was appointed in July 2009 and is responsible for the management and supervision of Bridgend Foster Care Team. The Manager is the Registered Fostering Services Manager for BCBC

Recruitment Officer

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

(b) Experience Has 25 years post qualifying experience in working with children and families; child protection, experience of a fostering team and specialist adolescent fostering team.

Senior Practitioner 1 –

(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 11 years post qualifying experience in child care with in B.C.B.C. Prior to qualifying has 3 years' experience in Youth Development work.

Senior Practitioner 2

- (a) Qualifications**
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| BA (Hons) English/ Classical Studies | 1980 |
| PGCE | 1981 |
| Diploma Social Work | 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 20 years post qualifying experience and was appointed to 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

There are 13 assessing and/or Supervising Social Workers within Bridgend Foster Care. With one social worker on a temporary contract for a year.

1 - Supervising Social Worker

- (a) Qualifications** 2007 BSC Psychology with English
2010 Masters Social Work

- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 2 years post qualifying experience in Safeguarding Social Work and 9 months Mental Health Social Work prior to this. Prior to qualifying has experience of working in statutory drug and alcohol services and private fostering, as part of the qualification. Volunteer work with Samaritans.

2 - Supervising Social Worker

- (a) Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work 2005
BTEC Early Childhood Studies
BSc (Econ)(Hons) Social Welfare
CACDP British Sign Language Level 1& 2
Higher Ed Cert in Child Protection 2010
BTEC Professional Development Certificate in Counselling Skills 2007

- (b) Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 9 years' experience. Prior to qualifying has experience of a charity for children with learning difficulties and an independent fostering agency.

3 - Supervising Social Worker

- (a) **Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work 2011
Diploma in Health and Social Care 2007
Certificate in Welfare Studies 2005
NVQ level 3 in health and Social Care 2004

Experience Is a qualified and registered social worker with 4 years' experience. Prior to qualifying has experience of working in business support for 2 years and then as a day care support worker in the safeguarding team until qualifying

4 –Supervising social worker

- (a) **Qualifications** HNC Business Management
DIPSW 2004

(b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 9 years' experience in generic childcare settings, adoption and fostering. Has previous experience of working with adults with learning disabilities in a day-care setting.

5 - Assessing Social Worker (P/T)

- a) **Qualifications** BA (Hons) Social Work 1986
CQSW 1986
A1 Assessor Award 2005

(b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 12 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.

6 - Assessing Social Worker (P/T)

- (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 11 years post qualifying experience in fostering & adoption with in B.C.B.C. Has worked as Senior practitioner within the team. Has experience of working in the voluntary sector in Britain and abroad.

7 – Assessing social worker

- (a) **Qualifications** MA DIPSW 2009
- (b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with 5 years post qualifying experience. Worked as a SW in a Looked After Childrens team for 3 years prior to this post. Prior to SW qualification worked with children with disabilities in Barnardos

8 – Assessing/Supervising Social Worker

- a) **Qualifications**
- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Diploma in Social Work | 2004 |
| Certificate in Welfare Studies | 2002 |
| OCN Counselling Skills & Theory | 2001 |
| Certificate in Youth Work | 2000 |
| PQ (1) | 2010 |
- (b) **Experience** 10 years post qualifying experience in short break services. Prior to qualifying worked as support worker with the National Probation Service, youth work, voluntary experience with Probation Service, Children's Society Advocacy and Mediation, and Victim Support. SSW in Family Link short break scheme, had a short period as the Senior Practitioner in Bridgend Foster care. Now has primary responsibility for the Supported Lodgings scheme

9 – Supervising Social Worker (P/T)

- 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 6 years post qualifying experience and 10 years pre qualifying 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).

10 – Supervising Social Worker

- (a) **Qualifications** BSc Economics and Sociology
NVQ 4 registered Manager
MA DipSW 2012
- (b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered

social worker with 8 months post qualifying experience. Worked as a student social worker in the family support team; involving direct work with children and young people and their families in a multi-disciplinary environment. Final placement was at Barnardo's TAITH service working with children who displayed sexually harmful behaviour. Previous experience working with adults with learning disabilities and Autism in residential and day centres.

11 - Supervising Social Worker

- (a) **Qualifications** Diploma in Welfare Studies
BSc Social Work 2009
ECDL
- (b) **Experience** Qualified and registered as a social worker since 2009, she has 4.5 years post qualifying experience in fostering. Previously, practice learning opportunities in disabled children's team, fostering team. Social worker has undertaken work in the voluntary work with Surestart and facilitated a support group for parents with children with Dyspraxia.

12 - Assessing/Supervising Social Worker –

- (a) **Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work 1995
Diploma in Welfare Studies 1992
Certificate in Welfare Studies 1991
- (b) **Experience** Supervising Social Worker – for Family Link Service is qualified and registered social worker with 15 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.

13- Support Care Service Assessing and Supervising Social Worker (P/T) –

- a) **Qualifications** Diploma in Social Work (DIPSW) 1995
Further and Adult education training certificate (FAETC) 1998/9
NVQ Assessor 2002
- b) **Experience** Is a qualified and registered social worker with approximately 13 years post qualifying experience and 3 years pre-qualifying experience. Experience in being a foster carer, working with adults with learning disabilities (short breaks care) residential and community. Parenting Facilitator in Swansea

1 - Supervising Social Work Assistant

- (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 in the private sector and statutory services. Has worked with Children's Services for 6 years with responsibility for providing admin support to Fostering & Adoption service for 5 years. Has worked As a placement support worker and in 2010 became a supervising social work assistant with responsibility for supervising Reg.38 carers.

1 – Placement Support Worker (P/T) –

- (a) **Qualifications** BSc in Psychology and Education (BPS)
Level 1 Counselling
Level 1 and 2 in British Sign Language.
MSc in Play & Therapeutic Play (pending completion)
Level 1 in Youth Work
- (b) **Experience** Worked for the Youth Service for 3 years specialising in sexual health as an advisor. Worked for a Play scheme mostly with children with disabilities and volunteered for a student voluntary agency. Volunteered for 1 year and a half with Stepping Stones which is a child therapy consultancy agency and have now been working there for almost a year. Is currently training as a therapeutic play specialist. Joined Family Support Team as a supervised contact worker and then as a Family Aide. Has worked in Bridgend Foster Care for 3 years as the Placement Support 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.

- South Wales Improvement Consortium (SWIC) have worked together to provide a best practice recruitment model, this is now standard operating practice and had made the recruitment process more efficient for applicants.
- 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 fostering recruitment officer post (senior practitioner equivalent) solidifies and reviews this work. 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 partially dedicated corporate Marketing Officer post works in close partnership with the Recruitment Officer to enhance and further promote the Service with distinct recruitment direction and leadership.
- The Support Care service now has active referrals and cases being worked. They also benefit from the distinct branded paperwork and advertising materials being delivered in the locality and a series of radio advertisements and well as information being shared via a wide variety of media sources. The Support care social worker actively goes to external and internal meeting to discuss the scheme and its opportunities with professionals.
- 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 continues to be entered onto the DRAIG computer database by the Recruitment Officer.
- We offer prospective carers contacting the service with information about foster care within 24 working 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 a monthly Meet and Greet event hosted by the Recruitment Officer with another social worker and a liaison carer in attendance.
- 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 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 the Team Manager/recruitment officer as whether to proceed to a Form F assessment.

- If applicants decide to proceed and their initial visit is positive, applicants are left specific individual sections of the Form F to begin filling out whilst their personal checks are carried out. Applicants are also nominated to attend the next available skills to foster course.
- Once checks are received, have been scrutinised and applicants are suitable for assessment applicants are allocated to an assessing social worker for a Form F assessment.

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 qualified Assessing Social Worker, training (skills to foster – 3 day course), 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 16 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 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 Regulations (Wales) 2003 and are completed using the current BAAF Assessment forms.
- 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 not less than 3 monthly 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 Regulations (Wales) 2003. Carers are required to sign these records, agree and carry out any action plan and to retain their own copy of supervision, those supervision records are signed off by a senior staff member within Bridgend Foster Care.

- 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. There is a mandatory core post approval training programme currently of nine components which carers are expected to complete over a three year period.
- Progress in skill development, confirmed through annual review, will enable general foster carers to access fee payments via the undertaking and successful completion of the Qualification Creditation Framework Level 4.
- Foster carers are offered other training as appropriate to their knowledge, skills and developmental needs.
- Online training is provided to carers with specific circumstances.
- Safer Caring agreements & Health & Safety checks are regularly reviewed at least annually; 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 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 gathered and is monitored through supervision.
- All general and relative foster carers in their first year of fostering and thereafter if requested for general carers whilst undertaking the QCF; will 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 will be supervised in their role by the Senior Practitioner on a 6 weekly basis. The creation of 5 liaison carers (3 geographically represented, alongside 1 for relatives and one for Reg.38 carers) has arisen from the completion of the review of the Level 4 arrangements.
- 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.

- 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 website is being updated and may include a section for foster carers to have their own forum.
- 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 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 Support Services whose support may be provided to ensure placement stability.
- Foster carers will be paid child allowances at the Welsh Government 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.
- The placement support worker role is primarily designed with a job purpose split into 3 specific areas:
 1. Supporting carers through complaints or allegations
 2. Supporting carers to manage challenging behaviour aimed to prevent placement disruption
 3. Assisting and supporting carers who are moving children on to adoptive placements.

6.4 Review

All carers are reviewed annually and their continued registration is considered by the Fostering Panel or at manager/officer level which then provides a recommendation to the Head of Service.

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 wherever possible at least every 3 years by a Panel, consisting of independent members.
- Carers' reviews being considered by a senior manager.
- Unannounced visits take place to foster placements at least annually.
- Carers' files being audited by the case responsible worker or their peers and then verified by Team Manager or senior member of the team.
- Sample files may audited by the Group Manager or other officers as part of a wider audit of services
- Supervising Social Workers and Support Workers receive monthly supervision. The Team Manager and senior practitioners receive 6 weekly supervision.
- Staff receive annual appraisals which may 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 4 in Health and Social Care for foster carers, strengthened by a comprehensive training needs analysis being completed annually.
- A Complaints and Representation Procedure for foster carers and children and information about advocacy
- Consultative events; any items raised are minuted and those minutes distributed to the whole of Bridgend Foster Care, foster carer population. Foster carers are to attend mandatorily as part of their Foster Carer Agreement; annually, the Information Consultation Event (ICE) which is held 2 times per 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

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.

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]

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

CSSIW

South West Wales Region

Government Buildings

Picton Terrace

Carmarthen

SA31 3BT

Telephone: 01267 245160

Fax: 01267 245140

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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