



Statement of Purpose

NFA Cymru

May 2018

nfa national
fostering
agency
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Introduction

This Statement of Purpose for NFA Cymru has been developed in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance contained in:

- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (Wales) 2003
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
- The Regulated Services (Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2017

The Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of the service and the facilities and services to be provided, as stipulated in legislation.

This annually reviewed document is provided, and/or made available upon request, to:

- Employees
- Foster carers
- Local Authorities
- Children and Young People
- Fostering Applicants
- The Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
- OFSTED
- The general public or other interested party

The Statement of Purpose is provided at each Inspection to the relevant CIW Inspector and is also published on the NFA website.

Name and Address of Inspection Body –

Care Inspectorate Wales

CIW National Office
Welsh Government
Rhydycar
CF48 1UZ

Telephone

0300 7900 126

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Status and Constitution

Company Structure

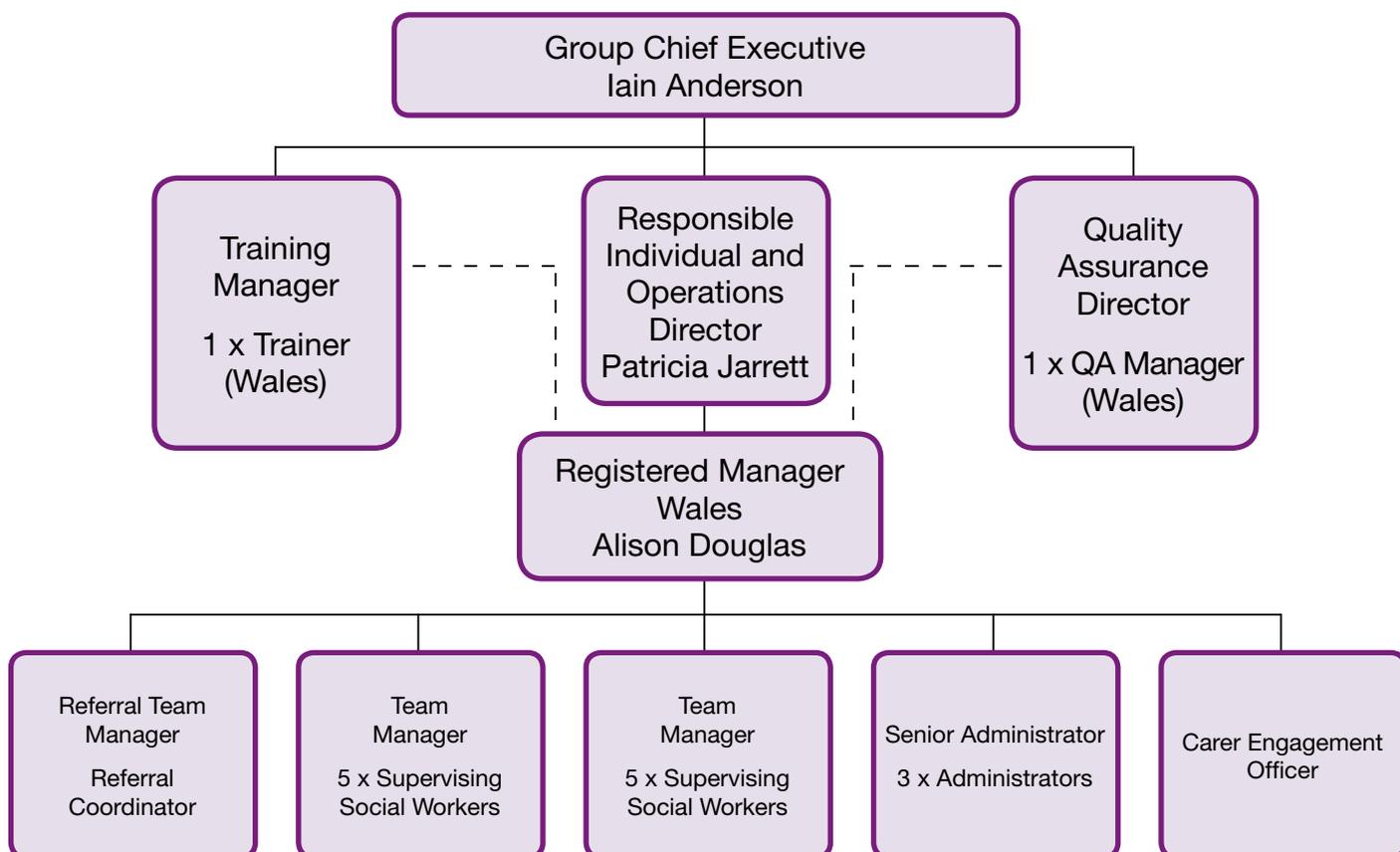
NFA Cymru is a distinct region of the National Fostering Agency Group (NFAG). The National Fostering Agency is an independent fostering provider and private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985.

The company number is **03127814**.

The NFA has been established as a fostering agency in England since 1995 and was registered in Wales in February 2006. The National Fostering Agency Group (NFAG) is one of most highly regarded fostering service providers which operate across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland through a clearly defined structure of regional teams and partner agencies.

Management Structure

The Responsible Individual for NFA Cymru/Wales is Patricia Jarrett and the Registered Manager is Alison Douglas. Early in 2018 a change will be made to the RI in favour of Patricia Jarrett, a more local senior manager.



Staff

The NFA is committed to the employment of suitably qualified, experienced staff and fully understands its duties under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. All managers in Wales have received Safer Recruitment training and the Registered Manager has received training directly from the DBS. A robust vetting process is in place and no employee is permitted to start their employment without an appropriate, returned DBS certificate.

The Registered Manager is a qualified social worker with over 17 years post qualifying experience. This includes 11 years working within NFA and 9 of those at management level.

In addition to formal monthly supervision with the Operational Manager, the Registered Manager meets with the company directors at monthly Business Review meetings.

On a quarterly basis, the Registered Manager also meets with other Registered and Regional managers within the NFA Group through the Registered Managers' Forum. This acts as a peer based learning opportunity to share good practice across the organisation.

All supervising social workers are qualified and registered with Social Care Wales. NFA Cymru usually only recruits social workers with at least 2 years post qualifying experience. This ensures that new recruits begin with a high degree of competency that can be further built upon through induction and training.

Team Managers within NFA undergo comprehensive management training through NFA's comprehensive 'Aspire, Achieve, Advance' programme. This is a series of days over the course of a year covering all aspects of management. Both field team managers in Wales have completed this course. As all qualified social work staff in NFA, team managers receive monthly supervision.

Supervising social workers receive monthly formal supervision from the team manager for their area and weekly telephone support as needed. A robust induction and training plan is in place for each social worker. In addition, social workers meet regularly for a Peer Supervision Group. This group works collaboratively to share new research, good practice and discuss difficult case issues.



Vision and Values

VISION:

The vision of the NFA is to be “Simply the Best” fostering provider.

Mission Statement

Delivering outstanding services for children and young people through enthusiasm and commitment.



VISION, MISSION, VALUES

Vision

To be “Simply the Best” fostering provider

Mission

Delivering outstanding services for children and young people through enthusiasm and commitment

Values

QUALITY

Excellence and trust in our outcomes.
All that we do meets or exceeds all statutory requirements and aims to achieve excellence through attention to detail and demonstrating best practice.

PEOPLE

Respect and consideration in how we treat people.
Respect for others and a team commitment to working together to collectively achieve our goals and aspirations.

FINANCE

Ethical and transparent in what we charge.
Being open and honest with our customers in being able to demonstrate value for money through our proposition and service offers.

SERVICE

Passion and integrity in what we do.
Extraordinary creativity in service and innovation by demonstrating our willingness to explore new approaches to improve the quality of life for the children and young people in our care.

Training

Providing high-quality flexible training to develop skills and help carers grow in confidence and knowledge



Aims and Objectives

Aims

The National Fostering Agency strives to attain leadership status across the UK by delivering, with professional integrity, high standards of quality care for the children placed with our foster carers.

We aim to provide tailored, cost effective care solutions through the provision of creative accommodation and support packages for young people.

The agency is committed to the delivery of a fostering service meeting and, where possible exceeding the standards as defined in statutory and regulatory requirements, including:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003
- Fostering Services: The National Minimum Standards (Wales)
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering (Wales) Regulations 2010
- Delegated Authority for Foster Carers (Guidance, 2011)
- Protecting Children Supporting Foster Carers – Dealing with Allegations against Foster Carers Protocol (Guidance, 2011)
- Welsh Language Standards (No 1) Regulations 2015 (implementation April 2016)
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims of the agency are:

- To provide a high quality fostering service for looked after children and young people of all ages that continually strives to be the best in Wales
- To support, supervise and provide on-going training to carers so that they are able to provide a comprehensive service that addresses the physical, emotional, educational and health needs of the children and young people placed with them

- To maintain a focus on positive outcomes for children and young people that can be measured and evidenced
- To promote positively the concept of professional foster carers
- To bring together carers who will support, educate and inform each other and who will work in partnership with all relevant professionals, agencies and families involved in the child's life
- To continually develop and improve upon the services we offer and to set the standard in independent foster care services.

Objectives

The NFA Cymru will employ policies, practices, procedures which seek at all times:

- To ensure the provision of high quality care to children and young people in a safe, healthy and nurturing family setting
- To meet the individual child's particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan
- To ensure that NFA Cymru operates in accordance with legislation and guidance, including the WAG's 7 Core Aims, and with adherence to NFA's own policies and procedures
- To protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
- To value diversity and promote equality, by recognising the importance of a child's ethnic origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background; and to consider fully a child's gender, sexuality and any disability they may have
- Actively offer and deliver Welsh language services to the same standard as English language services, known as the 'Active Offer' under the Welsh Government's 'More than Just Words' framework.
- To develop the child's sense of identity and self-worth
- To achieve high placement stability rates and positive outcomes for children and young people in all dimensions of their lives including Health, Education, Family and Social Relationships, Emotional and Behavioural Stability, Identity, Social Presentation and Self Care

- To seek the views and opinions of children and promote participation
- To recruit individuals and families from all parts of the community that reflect the wide range of children's needs
- To offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer's skills, experiences and circumstances
- To provide high quality, accessible training that enables carers to develop their skills and knowledge so as to better meet the needs of children placed with them
- To organise and manage the agency's resources effectively to ensure the best possible service delivery and the safety of children
- To maintain the skill and knowledge base of staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes
- To maintain secure and accurate records for children, carers and staff that evidences the quality of the fostering agency and compliance with legislation and guidance



Equality and Diversity

NFA recognise the diverse society and communities in which we all live and work. We embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. We aim to recruit people from all backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the regions we cover.

In Wales, NFA seeks to actively recruit Welsh speaking foster carers and staff that represent the national language spoken by around 20% of the Welsh population. The Agency in Wales actively promotes the use of the Welsh language and is able to offer its services through the medium of Welsh and English.

Wales has seen a rise in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in the last few years and therefore the agency has a drive to reach out to carers of other racial backgrounds that can reflect or identify with the children referred. Matching is of paramount importance and NFA Cymru regularly reviews referral patterns and trends in order to shape its recruitment strategy and have a range of appropriately matched placements to offer the local authorities it serves.

The fostering service in Wales considers the needs of all young people referred in regards to race, gender, culture, religion, sexuality, ability and geographic origin, and will endeavour to promote each young person's sense of identity through well matched placements, training provided to foster carers and support to the young person.

NFA has an Equal Opportunities Policy which applies to staff, foster carers and young people. Training is mandatory for all staff and carers to assist them to understand and value diversity. Training includes an understanding of the rights and needs of disabled children and young people, those who are gay or who are struggling with their sexuality. NFA Cymru encourages and supports fostering applicants who are gay and uses links to the wider gay community to promote fostering. NFA also encourages applications from people with disabilities who can evidence the potential ability to provide appropriate care of a child or young person in the same way as an able bodied applicant.

We want all children and young people in our placements, our foster carers and employees to feel valued and treated equally and fairly. Our goal is to ensure our values are embedded in our day to day working practices with all our stakeholders and service users.

There is a commitment to challenging individuals or groups who discriminate against any of our young people in any way and diversity is celebrated through daily living experiences and educational programmes.



The Voice of the Child

Children and Young People's Rights

In 2001, Wales became the first region in the United Kingdom to appoint a Children's Commissioner. The organisation's principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales. The current Commissioner is Sally Holland.

In exercising her functions, the Children's Commissioner for Wales must have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); a list of 40 fundamental rights held by children. These rights were ratified in the UK in 1992 and have now been adopted by nearly every country in the world.

The Welsh Government's 7 Core Aims are a summary of the UNCRC and should underpin the planning and working practices of any service or organisation working with children and young people in Wales.

Children and young people should:

1. Have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development.
2. Have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills.
3. Enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation.
4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.
5. Be listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised.
6. Have a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional well-being.
7. Not be disadvantaged by child poverty.

Children's Participation & Consultation in NFA Cymru

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children have the right to a voice and for their opinion to be heard and valued on matters that affect them.

Listening to children and young people is something that the NFA takes very seriously and has sought to embed opportunities to capture young people's views and feelings throughout their stay in foster care.

NFA Cymru uses feedback from children and young people to shape and improve the services it offers.

The fostering agency provides a wealth of opportunities for children and young people to participate and engage. Feedback forms for looked after children were re-designed through consultation with young people and are routinely used as part of the foster carer's review. Home visits also provide an opportunity for NFA's social workers to see children and young people on their own. Staff and managers ensure that children and young people are spoken to by the supervising social worker quarterly as a minimum.

Supervising social workers and foster carers also encourage and support young people to attend their LAC reviews and participate as best they can.

NFA Wales has also implemented an exit questionnaire for older children to complete to tell us about their time in foster care. Feedback is analysed by the registered manager and services are shaped as a result.

NFA Cymru holds an annual national consultation event in Wales which uses the creative arts to engage children and young people and elicit their views and feelings. This consultation event forms part of a National strategy across NFA in the UK to engage with young people.

Alongside these events, consultation nationally also takes place through questionnaires, on line surveys, local activities and feedback forms for carers' annual reviews and children's LAC reviews. In addition, all children and young people receive a copy of their own magazine "Kidslines" or "Teenlines" filled with articles from children and young people and other interesting news.

NFA also operates an email facility where children and young people can contact NFA directly with their suggestions and feedback about the services we offer. All children are presented with a Children's Guide that has details of who to contact if they are unhappy about any element of their care. Our foster carers are also trained to advocate on a child's behalf should a child or young person be dissatisfied with any aspect of their care plan.

The recruitment of staff also includes a commitment to involve young people. A group of looked after children have created a DVD of questions for use at interview that supplements the standard interview format and forms an integral part of the recruitment process.



Children's Outcomes

Outcomes for children and young people remain a key focus for NFA. In Wales, as part of the All Wales Framework Contract, NFA Cymru undergoes a Quality Performance Assessment (QPA) on an annual basis. This QPA was developed by local authorities in the Framework as an outcome focused approach that is able to benchmark fostering agencies and the outcomes they achieve for the children and young people they care for.

From a commissioning perspective it is important to know whether commissioned services are effective at improving outcomes of children placed with a particular agency and the QPA seeks to establish this in specifically identified areas. Information from local authority social workers, looked after young people and fostering agencies responses is triangulated to validate outcomes achieved. The following outcome dimensions are used:

- Health
- Education
- Family & Social
- Emotional & Behavioural
- Identity
- Social Presentation
- Self Care
- Safeguarding

Social Workers in Wales regularly collate the progress of children and young people placed with foster carers. The NFA database enables systematic recording of monthly visits under the most important dimensions under the child.

Foster carers also track the progress of the young people they care for through the Monthly Progress Report. This also identifies the core dimensions so that recording can take place under focused headings. For example, children's educational achievements and their contact with family can be recorded in this way.

Both quantitative and qualitative outcome data is collated and reviewed by social workers, managers and the registered manager. This data also feeds into the annual Quality of Care Review that helps to shape services and complete the cycle of continual improvement.



Services: Placement Provision

NFA provides a range of placement types as defined by the local authorities which commission our services. These include:

- **Emergency Placements** (provided at short notice, including out of hours)
- **Bridging Placements** (short term flexible placement, focussing on a move to longer term placement)
- **Short Term Placements** (of any duration, for a child whose long term plan is still undecided)
- **Long Term Placements/Permanence** (care up to and into adult independence)
- **Sibling Placements**
- **Solo Placements** (for children and young people who are unable to be placed alongside other children)
- **Respite Care** (one off or regular short duration stays away from main carer or parent)
- **Shared Care** (where the child or young person will reside in foster care for part of the week or weekends or holidays on a regular ongoing basis)
- **Short Breaks** (intensive short-term foster care to support families in crisis with a view to avoiding longer term accommodation)
- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**
- **Transitional Fostering** (for young people transitioning from residential care into a family environment)
- **Parent and Child** (family based environment where parenting skills are able to be modelled, observed and assessed in line with the placement agreement)
- **Remand Placements** (where a child is ordered by a court to reside with a foster carer)



Placement Support Services

In recognition of the individual strengths and needs of each child, NFA has developed, and continues to develop additional support services that assist in maintaining placement stability and in achieving positive outcomes.

Whilst not an exhaustive list the following types of services have been developed and are available:

Sessional Support Workers

A small and carefully selected pool of independent professionals are employed by NFA Cymru on an hourly basis to undertake tasks as required within a child's care plan. Tasks can include direct work with children, transport, supervision of contact, and access to leisure or educational activities.

Therapeutic Consultations

The NFA can provide additional PACE (Therapeutic Parenting) training and consultation on a one to one basis for foster carers providing placements for children who have experienced developmental trauma. A Theraplay service is also being developed and the agency is currently training a supervising social worker to enable the delivery. Other therapeutic services can also be externally commissioned, such as therapy for children and young people or sessions with a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Support for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation

NFA is a member of the NWG (National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Young People). NFA Cymru also sit on the Gwent Missing Children's Fostering Forum. In addition, the team regularly commissions training from Stop it Now and the majority of social workers in Wales have received CSE training.

NFA Cymru is committed to supporting carers to safeguard children at risk of CSE. The agency provides training for foster carers and facilitates awareness raising events for young people so that they can understand the risks that they may face either online or in the community.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People

NFA Cymru has responded positively to the increased demand for this placement type. Through targeted recruitment, foster carers who are suitable and who have an interest in caring for unaccompanied young people have been recruited. These have included Muslim couples and those whose first language is not English. NFA Cymru has now developed a cohort of dedicated foster carers who specialise in this type of foster placement. They are supported and encouraged to work together as a 'hub' to share good practice and knowledge of community facilities, including cultural and religious resources. There is also a dedicated support group for these foster carers with external speakers such as translation specialists and lawyers working with asylum cases.



Recruitment and Approval of Foster Carers

The National Fostering Agency is committed to delivering quality placements to our local authority customers. The local recruitment strategy in Wales is shaped by referral trends recorded by the fostering agency and also the published 'Needs Analysis' in respect of looked after children published by the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru.

Recruitment

The skills required of foster carers able to meet the needs of children referred are varied and wide-ranging; this is reflected in the diversity of people who become NFA carers. The agency recruits individuals and families from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and from all parts of the community, who can bring a variety of experiences to the fostering task and aid good matching.

Recruitment takes place on a number of levels, from public facing direct promotional stalls, advertising, and word of mouth recommendations. NFA has a reward scheme for foster carers who refer new applicants through the assessment process.

NFA Wales has a dedicated Carer Engagement Officer who assists the Regional Manager in the implementation of the recruitment strategy for the region. She also ensures that accurate details are recorded and that applications and assessments are processed in a timely fashion.

Application Process

The NFA website provides potential carers with information and real life case examples to help them make informed choices about fostering for the agency. Enquiries can be made online, by telephone or dedicated text. All applicants in Wales will be contacted initially by the Carer Engagement Officer or a qualified social worker, who will discuss their interest, arrange to send out an information pack and if appropriate takes steps to arrange an initial visit. NFA is also using a dedicated central team to undertake some initial screening calls.

Initial Visits

All Initial Visits are undertaken by a local qualified Social Worker in the prospective carer's home. Accurate and realistic information about the fostering task, needs of children in the local area and support provided by the agency is shared. The Social Worker will consider with the potential applicant through discussion their skills and motivation, alongside practical requirements to foster. The Social Worker will complete an Initial Visit Report with a recommendation as to whether to progress the applicant to assessment. This report is sent to a manager for consideration, comment and counter-signature.

Transferring Carers

The NFA recognises that carers have choices and that in some instances decisions are made to move between approving agencies. In these circumstances Fostering Network's 'Transfer of Carers: Protocol' is followed, and the agency works closely with responsible Local Authorities to ensure that the care experiences of any children in placement are not detrimentally affected by the transfer.

Assessment of Prospective Carers

All assessments are conducted by qualified, registered Social Workers in accordance with the Fostering Regulations (Wales) 2003. The majority of assessments are carried out by commissioned independent social workers who are selected for their experience and competence. The majority of assessors have been carrying out assessments for NFA for at least 2 years. Assessors are provided with supervision and guidance from the Welsh team and the Quality Assurance Manager for Wales. The Agency is currently exploring the possibility of a centralised assessment service and this is likely to be developed in the coming year.

All candidates must:

- Complete a standard application form, providing comprehensive details about themselves and members of their household
- Give agreement for the required statutory checks to be undertaken
- Agree to undertake a medical with their GP, the results of which are viewed by our medical advisor prior to making a recommendation regarding fitness to foster
- Provide the names of three referees who can provide an independent view of the applicant's abilities and suitability of the household
- Provide details of any ex-partners with whom they have jointly parented a child unless there are exceptional circumstances to indicate this is inappropriate. The agency is required to interview any ex-partners as part of the assessment process
- Provide details of all children / adult children, of the applicants who will need to be interviewed through the assessment
- Give their agreement to an employer's reference being sought by the agency

Should sufficient concern be raised by any of these enquiries then the decision not to proceed with the assessment may be reached. In such cases the Registered Manager will write to the applicants outlining the reasons for this decision and providing detail of the agency's complaints procedure.

As part of the assessment process applicants are required to attend a 3 day Skills to Foster Training programme which will inform their preparation to foster.

In addition, an evidence based written (Form F) report covers:

- The applicants motivation to be a foster carer
- Their capabilities and individual skills
- The feelings, views and involvement of all household members, including applicant's children who may live away from the home
- Any existing demands made on the applicant
- Recommendations in terms of matching alongside the family

Approval

Following completion of all statutory enquiries, all assessments are considered by a properly constituted and independent Panel, which makes recommendations to the agency regarding the suitability of the applicant to be a foster carer. This may include any additional terms that the panel considers should apply. The agency decision maker takes full account of the panel's recommendations when reaching decisions.

Prospective carers are asked to attend the panel alongside their assessing Social Worker. Should the agency not recommend approval, the applicant will be written to outlining reasons for this decision and provided with information regarding their right to appeal, or to access the Independent Review Mechanism.

All successful applicants are provided with a Foster Carer Agreement, confirming their appointment as an agency carer. It gives details about their terms of approval, and outlines expectations of both carer and agency.

Foster carers are provided with a comprehensive fostering handbook which contains information and procedures in all aspects of the fostering task. It is updated regularly to ensure it remains a relevant reference document, and is also available online via access to a secure carer area provided upon approval.

At this stage foster carers are also provided with access to a full training programme in order to begin building on their initial Skills to Foster training and continue their development as carers.







Reviews of Foster Carers

Review and Terminations of Approval

The Agency reviews carer approval annually, or following a significant event or change within the household. This ensures the carer's continued suitability in line with statutory requirements and that their approval reflects their ongoing development.

The review is usually conducted in the carer's home and the recommendation is then considered by an independent manager. For reviews involving complaints and allegations the agency may externally commission an independent chair if this is deemed beneficial.

The agency may only propose to amend a foster carers terms of approval following a review in accordance with Fostering Regulations. Reviews are presented to panel following the first year of fostering and any significant event including complaints or allegations. Applicants are invited to attend and encouraged to do so. Where a change of approval is proposed the agency must issue a 'qualifying determination' and provide details of the applicants right to appeal or access the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

For all reviews a full report will be prepared by the agency Social Worker and contributions from the child's Social Worker and children placed will be sought. The views of any birth children in the household and the foster child's family will also be requested.

The review provides an opportunity for the agency and carer to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead. It takes account of:

- Recommendations of the previous review
- Enquiries made and information obtained by the agency
- Outcomes for children placed in this household since the last review
- Any significant changes in the household including to accommodation
- Training undertaken by the carer and support given

- The views of the Carer and all members of the household including children who are/have been placed during this period
- The views of placing authorities
- The views of birth children
- The views of family members of the child or children placed
- Updates on all statutory checks
- Annual updates on Health and Safety checks
- Any concerns, complaints or compliments

The review recommendation will then be presented to the Agency Decision Maker by the relevant independent manager for approval. The carer will then receive confirmation of their re-approval in writing.



Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

In accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker. It is the social worker's role to ensure that the carer receives the guidance, training and supervision to enable them to provide consistent, high quality care for a child or young person placed in her or his home.

Social workers and foster carers understand that the welfare of the child will remain paramount at all times.

Role of the Supervising Social Worker

NFA Supervising Social Workers will:

- Undertake and record at least one supervision visit per month (more if needed or agreed in the placement plan)
- Make and record at least one telephone call per week to the foster carer.
- Make and record at least two unannounced visits a year and carry out a fostering bedroom check at least every three months.
- Be present when Children are placed and ensure that LAC documentation is received
- Ensure that the child in placement is seen quarterly and that children's views are sought and recorded
- Complete the Annual Foster Carer Review
- Regularly review the training needs of the foster carer and oversee the training plan
- The supervising social worker must undertake an annual Health and Safety inspection using the health and safety check list.
- Ensure the Form F is kept up to date
- Ensure that the appropriate work is completed following a change to a fostering household; this will include changes to the household composition.
- Give consideration to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers
- Work in partnership with Local Authority Social Workers and other relevant professionals
- Be present at LAC Reviews and other Statutory Meetings

- Inform their line manager of any complaints immediately
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant legislation and good practice guidelines. For example National Minimum Standards, Fostering Services Regulations, Children's Act 1989, Data Protection Act 1998 etc
- Work in accordance with the NFA's policies and procedures

Support Out of Hours

Foster carers undertake a highly demanding role that continues 24/7. NFA recognises that support for foster carers must be robust enough to meet this challenge at all times. Foster carers therefore have access to a qualified supervising social worker around the clock. Outside office hours this will be undertaken on a rota basis by the supervising social worker in Wales. Managers are similarly available out of office hours to support their staff and foster carers should a serious incident arise or advice and guidance be needed.

Support Groups

All foster carers in Wales have access to a support group in their locality. Groups meet regularly and are facilitated by the manager and social workers in the area. This provides a level of peer support and an opportunity to raise topics of interest. Smaller scale 'seminar' style training is also provided at these groups by supervising social workers, managers and invited guests. In the past, speakers have included the Fire Service, the Police and local Substance Misuse Service.

Foster Carer Forum

NFA holds regular Foster Carer Forums where feedback from carers can be used to help shape services. Every region in the UK has a carer representative at the forum.

Carer Mentors

NFA Cymru assigns a carer mentor to each newly approved foster carer. This person is an experienced foster carer who is willing and able to give support and guidance to the carer, particularly throughout their first fostering year.

FosterTalk

The NFA provides membership of FosterTalk for every fostering household in the agency. FosterTalk provide independent support and advice for foster carers, including those facing allegations and complaints. Further benefits of membership include:

- Legal expenses insurance cover
- 24 hour legal assistance
- Accountancy advice
- Counselling helpline
- Education Advisory Service
- Website and online Forum



Referrals and Matching

The majority of foster placements in Wales are commissioned through the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR); a secure on-line commissioning and matching tool used by most Welsh local authorities. The remaining children are placed following referrals made via telephone or email. Outside of office hours, emergency placements are usually arranged by telephone.

Regardless of the route, during office hours upon receipt of a referral from a local authority, NFA referral coordinators will consider the needs of the child and propose a match with carers available. In Wales, the social work qualified Referral Team Manager will oversee this process.

A decision about a placement offer regarding a particular foster carer will be based upon:

- Their experience, knowledge and skills
- Their location and the distance from the foster home to the child's school and community
- Any other children in the placement
- The foster carer's own children and other family members
- The child's individual matching requirements including risk information, cultural needs and wishes

All information known about the child from the referral will be shared with the potential carers. The referral coordinator will present potential matches, identifying how the carers can meet the needs of the child. They will also complete a Risk Matching Matrix, a document that identifies support needs, risks and the appropriateness of the match, or otherwise. This document serves to evidence considerations given for the match and the decision to make the offer.

The Referral Coordinator will complete the Expression of Interest form through CCSR or respond via email if the local authority prefers. If gaps in their ability to meet the child's needs are identified, additional support, services or training will be offered. A profile of the carers, setting out details of the family, their home and their experience and training can be forwarded to the local authority for use by the child's social worker to introduce the child to the carers. The carers' form F and most recent annual review report together with any other information requested is forwarded to the local authority.

The Referral Team Manager gathers statistical information and trends about the types of referral and geographical areas. The Manager will also respond to any commissioning queries or issues raised by the local authority around this service. The Referral Manager or a Referral Coordinator will also attend placement seeking meetings with local authorities within the All Wales Framework. This is where several referrals may be considered for children and young people who have complex needs. Their profiles are presented in person by the child's social worker to any independent fostering agencies who are invited to attend. This provides an opportunity for NFA Cymru and other agencies to ask more specific questions about young people's needs, and enables the social worker to 'bring to life' the child in question.



Training and Development

NFA is able to demonstrate a strong commitment to learning and development across its employees and its foster carers.

Staff

Continuing Professional Development is a requirement of registration for social workers and NFA takes responsibility for this by ensuring appropriate training opportunities are provided.

Through induction and at annual appraisals, social workers discuss and identify their learning and development needs with their managers. This informs a training plan for the coming year. A mixture of both in house and external provision can be accessed, as well as online training through our partners. All social workers undertake PACE (Therapeutic Parenting) training in order that they can fully understand and support foster carers who look after children who have experienced developmental trauma. Training is also provided in Child Sexual Exploitation.

Individual learning needs are tailored toward career development alongside the development of any specialism that a social worker may be interested in developing. This adds value to the local service delivered and provides the team with 'champions' in certain areas.

Social Workers are also encouraged to undertake training offered by our local authority partners where places are available for independent agencies.

Team managers are encouraged to complete 'Aspire, Achieve, Advance' training. Both field managers within NFA Cymru have completed this programme. Managers are also given the opportunity to achieve an ILM in management. One of the two field team managers has already completed this award.

Support staff in the Welsh registered office are also provided with training appropriate to their role. For example, all new recruits complete online Diversity, and basic Child Protection training. They have also received training on the 'Active Offer' in order to promote the use of the Welsh language and offer the Agency's services in the medium of Welsh.

Students

NFA Cymru also welcomes the placement of students. It has a track record in providing a stimulating and supportive learning environment highly valued by the universities and the students themselves. There are currently 5 qualified Practice Teachers in the Welsh team.

Supervising social workers are also supported to undertake training in becoming Practice Teachers.

Foster Carers

The NFA recognises the importance of Continual Professional Development and offers a comprehensive training programme to all its foster carers. In addition, the agency facilitates seminar topics at support groups, provides online training and access to books, DVDs and external training courses when appropriate.

All of the training provided by the NFA aims to enable foster carers to work with parents and children in the context of a multi-racial society and to develop positive attitudes to disadvantaged groups. In doing so each foster carer is provided with the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge to provide high quality care for each individual child placed.

The NFA's training courses are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they include the most up to date research and legislation and are reflective of any changes to NFA policies.

The NFA's training programme runs annually. Courses are timetabled to avoid school holidays so that carers have opportunities to focus on their learning as well as time to enjoy holiday periods with their foster children.

Our foster carers are expected to participate in a variety of learning opportunities each year. To ensure easy access to training courses NFA uses local venues throughout the Wales to minimise travel time. We are also keen to acknowledge the transferable skills some carers acquire through their own work related training.

Each NFA Carer has an individual training profile, created at the point of Home Study Assessment. The training profile is continually updated with information about the carers attendance at training, seminars and e-learning courses completed and are pulled through into the Foster Carer's Annual Review Report.

Following successful completion of the Skills to Foster training and approval at the fostering panel, foster carers are required to maintain their professional development through regular attendance at training throughout their fostering career. In the first two years of approval, carers are encouraged to complete the Induction courses which consist of:

- Working in Partnership
- Attachment
- Safe guarding/Child Protection and Safer Caring
- Understand Behaviours
- First Aid

In addition, carers are offered more specialised training around supporting children who have experienced disrupted attachments and developmental trauma. This is termed 'PACE' (Therapeutic Parenting) training, and is an evidenced based approach within the Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy model.

In recognition of the high numbers of looked after children at risk of child sexual exploitation, NFA Cymru also offers ongoing training on this subject to both carers and staff.

A comprehensive training prospectus of both Induction and CPDC (advanced) courses on offer is provided to foster carers at the start of the training year. Together with their supervising social workers, carers identify and book the most appropriate courses for the year ahead.



Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

The National Fostering Agency (NFA) is committed to providing placements for children where they will be happy and safe, and able to develop to their full potential. Under international law all children should be protected:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 19)

NFA Policy

NFA regularly reviews and revises its comprehensive Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, in accordance with Regulation 12 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The NFA understands that the production of a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy does not in itself lead to children in placements being protected; rather it is how it is implemented, an understanding of child protection, and provision of specific training that brings Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers closer to safeguarding children. The Policy does demonstrate the steps the NFA is taking to actively promote a safeguarding culture. It seeks to:

- Clarify what is meant by safe recruitment and employment
- Define roles and responsibilities (Supervising Social Worker and foster carer)
- Promote effective listening to children and appropriate responses
- Guide foster carers and employees on their actions when they have concerns and when a child has disclosed a child protection issue
- Inform and support through details of training and development, understanding of legislation and essential good practice documents
- Help individuals recognise signs of abuse through descriptions of the categories of abuse

Child Protection and Safeguarding are integral to all aspects of the NFA operational framework and are relevant to each of its Policies and Procedures.

To underpin our Policy and our commitment to providing placements for children where they will be happy and safe, and able to develop to their full potential, our recruitment, training and assessment of carers and staff focuses strongly

on strengthening the safeguarding of children. Safer Recruitment Guidelines are observed in the recruitment of all staff working for the organisation, whilst extensive checks are undertaken on carers, in a context of a robust culture of exploring prospective carers' histories and motivation.

Safeguarding and the welfare of children is championed at the highest level, by the Chief Executive Officer, who chairs the agency Safeguarding Committee. This Committee has been formed to ensure that safeguarding is integral to all aspects

of the organisation and that allegations are dealt with effectively. It analyses audits which have been undertaken, and ensures that learning from incidences which have occurred is used to improve practice. The Committee provides regular reports to the Board.

Risk Assessment

At the point of placement, supervising social workers are responsible for coordinating the completion of a risk assessment. The purpose of the risk assessment is not merely to identify risks, but to identify what steps can be put in place to minimise the risk and manage these. Risk assessments are updated at least annually and at any point when information comes to light which would require a fresh assessment. The risk assessment extends to managing risk in relation to a child going missing, and risks associated with potential sexual exploitation.

Clear procedures are in place in relation to accidents and critical incidents, behaviour management when physical intervention may be required, dealing with complaints allegations and standards of care concerns. The registered manager provides regular reports to the responsible individual regarding all such concerns, including their outcome and the length of time taken to

resolve the issue. Following complaints, allegations and standards of care, carers are reviewed and the review is presented to panel.

NFA staff take the initiative to request that local authorities convene strategy or professionals meetings when there is concern about the safety of a child/young person e.g. young person regularly going missing.

Foster carers receive mandatory training on recognising the signs of abuse, understanding the impact of abuse on the children they will be looking after and knowing what to do in the event of suspecting that a child is suffering harm. Managers undertake mandatory online training in Safer Recruitment, provided by the NSPCC.

Reporting Concerns

Concerns about standards of care issues or allegations against carers are reported in accordance with NFA's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The Registered Manager oversees all cases where a carer's conduct is being investigated and ensures that referrals are made to the appropriate local authority Safeguarding Officer based on the carers' location.

Carers subject to allegations of abuse or standards of care have access through FosterTalk to independent support and advice, including legal assistance.

Following investigation, all cases are brought to panel in the form of a Foster Carer Review, with a recommendation made by the social worker as to the re-approval or otherwise of the foster carer, together with any support, supervision or training recommendations. Referrals to the DBS are considered by the Registered Manager, the Safeguarding Committee and the Responsible Individual.

The Context of Wales

NFA Cymru adheres to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008. The Procedures combine the shared knowledge and experiences of Wales' 22 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and reflect the changes required as a result of high-profile child protection reports like the Laming Report. The Agency also ensures that staff follow guidance under Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004.

Following the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014, a National Independent Safeguarding Board was established in Wales in 2017. This oversees the work of the LSCB's.

The procedures address a wide range of safeguarding issues, including new mediums in which abuse can occur, such as the internet, and incorporate learning from research and practice from other parts of the world.

The shared Welsh procedures have been achieved through the work of the All Wales Child Protection Review Group which has been meeting on a regular basis since the production of the All Wales Procedures in 2002.

A hard copy of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 is available as a reference in the NFA Cardiff office. On-line versions are also made available to all staff in Wales.

Quality Assurance

The NFA has developed a Quality Assurance Department which includes a National Director of Quality Assurance based centrally in Uxbridge with a Quality Assurance Manager for each of the NFA Regions, including a dedicated manager for Wales.

The Quality Assurance Department has overall responsibility for ensuring consistency of service across the NFA's UK operations and has an overall monitoring and auditing role in relation to all aspects of the agency's work.

The management team in Wales completes monthly audits of case files and recordings and ensures that formal supervision sessions with Supervising Social Workers and Managers is completed and recorded. This provides an opportunity for discussion around quality of work and practice issues.

Our investment in our bespoke IT system ensures consistency and improvement of safe working practices and services that meet customer's qualitative and regulatory requirements. The system has been developed to include the capacity to record children's outcomes and to meet the requirements of current legislation, whilst offering the flexibility to manage information and data in a secure environment.

The system is also designed to 'flag' issues to managers around late recordings or a specific issue that the social worker wishes to formally raise.

The Registered Manager carries out the Quality of Care Review annually. The Review is a requirement under Regulation 42 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. The Quality of Care Review measures the service's performance against its aims and objectives, monitors and analyses Schedule 7 matters, as well evaluating outcomes and achievements of children placed. The Review provides an opportunity to champion good practice and identify areas for development that can be taken forward the following year.

A Practice Transformation and Compliance Team has been appointed to the Group with their key role being to support the Groups drive towards continuous improvement by working with colleagues in both operation and QA roles to promote service wide understanding and commitment to internal audit as an integral aspect of the Groups strategy.





Complaints and Representations

NFA regularly reviews and revises its Complaints and Representations Policy and Procedure. This document was drawn up in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and provides the framework in which complaints and representations are managed within the National Fostering Agency.

The Policy is in line with the Care Standards 2000, and the Children Act 1989 (Regulatory Reform and Complaints) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

The Registered Manager for Wales is responsible for ensuring that procedures are followed in accordance with guidance and legislation and that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. The Registered Manager will review any outcomes or recommendations and disseminate these to the team whilst also considering any practice or training issues that need to be taken forward.

Complaints can be made by, or on behalf of, children and young people, foster carers, NFA employees, by other organisations and their employees and by members of the public.

A foster child or their family receiving a service from the NFA commissioned by the local authority may complain directly to the respective local authority at any time.

Where the complaint involves both the NFA and the respective local authority, an agreement will be reached between the two parties on which agency will investigate the complaint. NFA staff inform children and young people, parents and foster carers of the respective local authority complaints system where appropriate.

Where necessary, particularly in respect of complaints by children and young people, NFA will assist in the provision of advocacy/support facilities.

Quality Assurance issues arising out of complaints and allegations are managed and reported to the Quality Assurance Director who also monitors the quality and effectiveness of the NFA complaints procedures.

Records of complaints are carefully recorded. Complaints, concerns and standards of care are regularly monitored and evaluated and are analysed annually at the time of the Quality of Care Review. NFA also reviews terminations of approval following complaints or concerns being brought to panel.



Finance

NFA's Financial Position

The agency's income is generated entirely by fees paid by the local authorities for placements with agency carers for looked after children. These fees are detailed in the agency's Schedule of Fees and individual contracts.

The agency's expenditure comprises fees to foster carers, staff salaries and the expenses associated with the running of the service. There is also an ongoing commitment to improving and enhancing services to foster carers and children. The agency's finances are subject to annual audits.

Agency fees

The Agency operates within a number of Framework Contracts for Independent Fostering agencies across the UK. In Wales, fees are agreed through the auspices of the All Wales Framework Agreement.

NFA takes pride in working in an ethical and transparent way in regards to its pricing structure. The agency is open and honest with local authority customers and can demonstrate value for money in relation to the services it offers and the outcomes that can be evidenced.

The Agency Fee Schedule incorporates discounts for long-term and sibling placements. Through the Framework review process in Wales, NFA has consistently evidenced positive outcomes for children and young people.

Any additional services required in order to meet a child's particular needs and circumstances, over and above those outlined in the contract, are negotiated and agreed with the responsible authority at the point of placement. Where a need arises at a later date, additional services are discussed and agreed at reviews or through formal commissioning meetings with the placing authority. Agreed changes are confirmed through the issuing of an Individual Placement Agreement by the responsible Local Authority. This could include, for example, additional educational support, support worker costs or ongoing therapeutic input from one of the professionals working with the agency.

Carers' Fees

Foster carer allowances are set and reviewed annually. The financial remuneration offered to agency carers reflects the demands of the task and quality of service carers are expected to offer. Out of their allowance, carers are expected to meet the routine cost of looking after a child, including food, clothing, celebration gifts, and school uniform.

A comprehensive breakdown of what the allowance is intended to cover is provided to all foster carers within their Carer Handbook. This is also referenced in the Foster Carer Agreement.

NFA Foster carers are paid weekly in arrears and gross of tax. All foster carers working with The National Fostering Agency (NFA) must register as 'Self Employed Foster Carers' with the Inland Revenue.



Accreditations

Leading Improvements for Looked After Children

This innovative and ground-breaking inspection body was set up to ensure that young people who have experienced care can influence and shape accommodation services for looked after children. Inspectors are trained young adults and young people who inspect a fostering service or care home on standards that the young people themselves, as an organisation, have devised. Services that meet an agreed criterion will be awarded the LILAC kite mark for good practice. A particular emphasis agreed by LILAC is on the participation and engagement of young people in any given service.

NFA Wales is proud to have achieved the LILAC award.



Customer Services Excellence Award

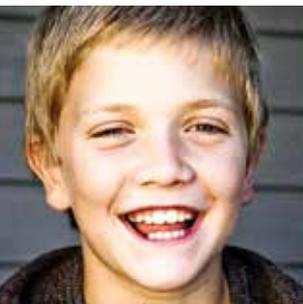
NFA has successfully achieved and maintained the Customer Service Excellence Award. The Government Standard for Customer Excellence builds on the legacy of the Charter Mark. It concentrates on the detailed experience of customers and actions taken by organisations to recognise and understand their customers, to give them a voice, to show how customers are listened to, and how their views shape the service. We believe that NFA were one of the first independent fostering organisations to achieve the award.



Investors in People

The National Fostering Agency is recognised as an Investor in People and has held the Award since 2004. In October 2013 the NFA achieved the Investors in People Gold Award and this has been consistently maintained since this date. NFA will continue to be an investor in people.





Insurance

The National Fostering Agency has an insurance package which is fully comprehensive and covers all the agency's activities and legal obligations. It is based on Fostering Network standards and covers both carers and the agency, as follows:

- Personal and Public Liabilities (indemnity limit £5 million)
- Employer's Liability Insurance (indemnity limit of £10 million)
- Professional Indemnity (indemnity limit £5 million)
- Abuse & Molestation (indemnity limit of £5 million)
- Foster Carer's Public Liability, All Risks, Thefts and Malicious Damage insurance whilst a child is in placement, excluding damage to motor vehicles
- Property already insured (limit £100,000 for one occurrence)
- Medical Malpractice (indemnity limit of £5 million)

The Foster Carer's insurance is provided by Market UK Limited Insurance Group via D E Ford Insurance Brokers. Premiums are paid by the agency although carers are required to have their own household contents insurance and are advised about the information they need to pass on to their insurers about their carer role. However, the agency will meet any excess on the individual carer's household contents policy in the event of a claim arising from the child's circumstances, needs or actions except where it is agreed otherwise.



Professional Membership

FosterTalk

FosterTalk provides high quality advice and support to foster carers, including those facing allegations, complaints and serious concerns.

The NFA purchases a membership to FosterTalk for each NFA approved foster carer which includes the following services:

- Legal expenses Insurance Cover
- 24 Hour Legal Advice Service
- Accountancy Advice
- Counseling Helpline
- General advice and support
- Education Advisory Service
- Advice on Personal Finances
- Medical First Aid Helpline
- Arrest Interview Assistance Cover
- Website communication, including a Foster Carer's Forum
- Quarterly Magazines
- Range of discounts

www.fostertalk.org
T: 0844 800 3880
E: enquiries@fostertalk.org

The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering. This means that they are uniquely placed to bring people and organisations together to improve the lives of children in foster care.

The Fostering Network works to raise the profile of foster care through lobbying and campaigning for improvements in foster care at UK, national and local level.

The NFA has a corporate membership with the:
Fostering Network
87 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8HA

T: 020 7620 6400 or 0800 040 7675
E: info@fostering.net

NWG

NWG is a network tackling child sexual exploitation they also provide high quality training that our staff members attend.

Each staff member has a membership to NWG (purchased by NFA) so that they may receive advice and support on individual cases.

www.nwgnetwork.org
T: 01332 585371



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Care Inspectorate Wales

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