



Statement of Purpose

NFA Cymru/Wales

February 2021

nfa national
fostering
agency
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Section 01

About the Provider



The National Fostering Agency (NFA) Cymru / Wales 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.

The Responsible Individual for NFA Cymru / Wales is Steve Christie and the Regional Manager Kim Perkins, has been appointed to manage the service on a 'day to day' basis.

The NFA Cymru / Wales registered office is at:-

Solva House
Springmeadow Business Park
Rumney
Cardiff CF3 2ES
Tel: 02921 672899

Although our registered office and headquarters is in Cardiff, we also have an office in Swansea and staff located across the country in South Wales, Mid Wales, West Wales, and North Wales to allow us to provide local support to our carers.

In addition to our Statement of Purpose, we also provide a written guide to our service (and both of these documents are reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently if any changes occur that we need to reflect in these documents).

Our Statement of Purpose and written guides are a source of information for children / young people and their families, foster carers (and people thinking of becoming foster carers), our staff and professionals from other agencies. Hard copies of both of this document can be provided in Welsh or English by phoning 02921 672899 or you can request a copy by writing to us at the above address.

The NFA Cymru / Wales and the National Fostering Group also has policies and procedures that have been developed to provide clear guidance for our staff, carers, applicants and Panel members. Our policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they remain current and we seek to promote practice that is anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory.

The NFA Cymru / Wales is committed to improving services and to ensuring the well-being of children and young people which is why we place high importance on our monitoring and quality assurance processes and review our aims and objectives and Agency documents on an on-going basis (updating them as required).

Section 02

What is a Statement of Purpose?



Our Statement of Purpose for Wales is prepared in accordance with Part 2 of The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019 and the Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services 2019.

In its preparation, we have also noted the requirements of the:-

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering (Wales) Regulations 2010
- The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015
- The Social Services and Well Being Act 2014
- The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
- The Regulated Services (Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2017
- The Regulated Services (Annual Returns) (Wales) Regulations 2017
- The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018
- The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019
- The Regulated Services (Annual Returns and Registration) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019
- The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Qualifications) (Wales) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020
- The Adoption and Fostering (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020

- The Adoption and Fostering (Wales) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020
- Welsh Government Guidance on Delegated Authority for Foster Carers
- Welsh Language Standards (No 1) Regulations 2015
- Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services 2019
- All Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019

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.

Our Statement of Purpose is a key document for our service and it:

- describes the services provided;
- gives information about where and how these services will be provided;
- gives information about the arrangements to support the delivery of the services.
- sets out our the vision for the service and our aspirations for meeting the needs of the children and young people we care for.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) regularly inspects our Fostering Agency to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives which are set out in our Statement of Purpose.

Section 03

How our services are provided



Mission Statement of our Group

Every day we improve the lives of thousands of children and young people, their families and communities through a relentless focus on caring and learning.

Vision

Our vision is to build incredible futures by empowering children young people in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

Values

- Deliver promises: Be accountable, take responsibility, focus on outcomes
- Inclusive spaces: Create safe, nurturing environments, care about what we do and each other, value diversity
- Open and honest: Be fair and transparent, do the right thing, act respectfully
- Dream big: Believe you can, make positive changes, inspire and innovate

Aims

The primary aims of our 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 our staff and 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.
- 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.

We 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.
- meet each individual child's particular needs and promote their best interests, in accordance with the care plan.
- ensure that we operate in accordance with legislation and guidance, including the Welsh Government's 7 Core Aims for children and young people, and with adherence to our own policies and procedures.
- protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
- 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).

- develop children's sense of identity and self-worth.
- 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 & Behavioural stability, Identity, Social Presentation and Self Care.
- seek the views and opinions of children and promote participation.
- recruit individuals and families from all parts of the community that reflect the wide range of children's needs.
- offer placements that carefully match the particular needs of the child to the carer's skills, experiences and circumstances.
- 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.
- organise and manage the agency's resources effectively to ensure the best possible service delivery and the safety of children
- maintain the skill and knowledge base of staff, managers and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes.
- maintain secure and accurate records for children, carers and staff that evidences the quality of the fostering agency and compliance with legislation and guidance.

We have an Equal Opportunities Policy which applies to staff, foster carers, children 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 children and young people from differing cultures, those with a significant health issue or disability, those who identify as LGBTQ+ or who are struggling with their sexuality. We also provide similar training for our carers.

In summary:-

- We consider the individual needs of all children and young people referred to us 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 child or young person.
- 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.
- We have a commitment to challenging individuals or groups who discriminate against any of our children, young people, staff or carers in any way and diversity is celebrated through daily living experiences and educational programmes.

Placement Provision

We provide a range of placement types and these include:-

- Emergency Placements (provided at short notice, including out of hours)
- Bridging Placements (short term flexible placement, focusing 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)
- Placements for brothers and sisters (with the aim of allowing sibling groups to remain living together)
- 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 together (family-based environment where parents can be supported and 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)

In respect of average fee levels, for most placements our agency complies with financial frameworks within the All Wales Framework Fostering Contract. These fees are set in consideration of capacity, as the agency is committed to remaining an attractive employer with sustainable caseloads for our staff. Commercial sensitivity restricts the provision of some information but overall the agency is committed to transparency which also helps with accountability.

Placement support services

In recognition of the differing strengths and needs of each individual child, we have developed, and continue 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:-

- Support workers - three support workers are employed to undertake tasks to assist in achieving the goals as set out in a child's Care and Support Plan; tasks can include

direct work with children and assisting them to access leisure or educational activities.

- Therapeutic training and consultations - we provide Therapeutic Parenting training for all of our staff and carers. We have a Social Worker trained and qualified in Theraplay within the service. We also are able to provide consultations for Social Workers and foster carers with psychologists and psychiatrists and if the responsible local authority wishes, we can also provide additional packages of therapeutic support for children and young people and their carers.
- Support for children at risk of exploitation - Our Group is a member of the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Young People, and NFA Cymru / Wales have had involvement with the Gwent Missing Children's Fostering Forum. Our staff also receive training on Child Sexual Exploitation, radicalisation and issues related to 'County Lines'. If it is known that children and young people coming into care with our agency are considered at risk of exploitation, we put an appropriate package of support in place which will include a risk assessment, monitoring, training and support to foster carers and sessional work with the young person. We are also committed to holding self-esteem and awareness raising events with young people, in partnership with local authorities.

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 Children's Commissioner in Wales is Sally Holland. In exercising her functions, she 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 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (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

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 we take very seriously and we have therefore sought to embed opportunities to capture young people's views and feelings throughout their stay in foster care. We also use feedback from children and young people to shape and improve the services we offer.

The fostering agency provides a wealth of opportunities for children and young people to participate and engage e.g. we have recently set up a forum, the Youth Group, to allow young people to meet and discuss issues that they feel are important. Our feedback forms for children and young people were re-designed through consultation with young people and are routinely used as part of the foster carer's review. We have also implemented an exit questionnaire for older children to complete to tell us about their time in foster care. Feedback is analysed by the managers and we take comments in to consideration when making future plans for our services.

Home visits also provide an opportunity our 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's on a quarterly basis as a minimum.

Supervising social workers and foster carers also encourage and support young people to attend the reviews of their Care and Support plans and other relevant meetings, supporting them to participate and advocating on their behalf where appropriate.

We also hold consultation events which use the creative arts to engage children and young people and elicit their views and feelings; these events form part of our Group's national strategy to engage with children and young people across the UK.

Alongside these events, consultation also takes place through questionnaires, on line surveys, local activities and feedback forms for carers' annual reviews and children's reviews.

We also operate an email facility where children and young people can contact us directly with their suggestions and feedback about the services we offer. All children are presented with a Written 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 and Support Plan.

In addition to the above, our Group has developed an online tool for children and young people to give feedback about their experiences whilst being in our care.

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

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 for all of our stakeholders and individuals using our services.

Children's Outcomes

Outcomes for children and young people remain a key focus and as part of the All Wales Framework Contract, we undergo 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. The responses obtained from local authority social workers, children and young people and fostering agencies are triangulated to validate outcomes achieved. The following outcome dimensions are used:

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

Our Social Workers regularly collate information about the progress of children and young people cared for by our foster carers. Our database enables systematic recording of

monthly visits under the most important dimensions for the child.

Foster carers also track the progress of the children and young people they care for through their logs 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, the Regional Manager and our Responsible Individual. This data also feeds into our quarterly Business Reviews and our 6 monthly Quality of Care Reviews (that help us to shape services and complete the cycle of continual improvement).

Recruitment and approval of Foster Carers

We are committed to delivering quality placements to our local authority customers. Our recruitment strategy is shaped by the referral trends we record and also the published 'Needs Analysis' in respect of Welsh children published by the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (also known as the 4Cs).

Recruitment

We recognise the diverse society and communities in which we all live and work. The skills our foster carers require to allow them to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for are varied and wide-ranging and 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, who can bring a variety of experiences to the fostering task.

Our main criteria for all applicants is that they can evidence the potential ability to provide appropriate care of a child or young person.

We actively seek to recruit Welsh speaking foster carers and staff that represent the national language spoken by around 20% of the Welsh population. We also actively promote the use of the Welsh language and are able to offer our 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 we regularly review 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.

We encourage and support applicants who identify as LGBTQ+ and we use links to the wider LGBTQ+ community to promote fostering.

We are also keen to encourage applicants with a disability to

apply to foster, again recognising that the more diversity we have within our agency, the better placed we are to meet the needs of a diverse group of children and young people.

Recruitment takes place on a number of differing platforms but is largely via social media and from word of mouth recommendations. We have a reward scheme for foster carers who refer new applicants through the assessment process.

Two dedicated Carer Recruitment Officers assist the managers in the implementation of the recruitment strategy for the region. They also ensure that applications and assessments are processed in a timely fashion and that accurate records are kept.

Application Process

Our website provides potential carers with information and real-life case examples to help them make informed choices about fostering for our agency. Enquiries can be made online, by telephone or dedicated text. All applicants are able to speak to a member of staff who will discuss their interest and who can arrange to send out an information pack and if appropriate takes steps to arrange an initial visit. We also use a dedicated central team to undertake some of our initial try to ensure there isn't a delay in our response.

We have an intranet for applicants and approved foster carers (NFA World) which provides an online tool for submission of applications to foster and useful information regarding all aspects of fostering including support groups and activities. NFA World is currently in the process of being further developed to provide further services.

Initial Visits

Our Initial Visits are undertaken by either one of our Carer Recruitment Officers or one of our Social Workers who lives local to 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 person undertaking the initial visit will have a discussion with the applicant about their skills and motivation and the practical requirements for fostering.

The worker will then complete an Initial Visit Report with a recommendation as to whether the applicant should progress to a full fostering assessment. This report is sent to a manager and the Assessment Manager for the region for their consideration, comments and counter-signature.

Where possible, our foster carer ambassadors will also attend initial visits to potential applicants alongside the worker to enhance the experience from the beginning of the process for the applicants. The foster carer ambassador's role is further being developed to include providing additional support as mentors, foster carer buddies and practical

assistance through "Helping Hands" tasks.

Transferring Carers

Whilst we won't actively recruit carers with other agencies, we recognise that carers have choices and that in some instances decisions are made to move between approving agencies. In such circumstances we follow the Fostering Network's 'Transfer of Carers: Protocol' and if the carers have children placed with them, the agency works closely with responsible local authorities to ensure that their care experiences are not detrimentally affected by the transfer.

Assessment of Prospective Carers

All of our assessments are conducted by qualified, registered Social Workers in accordance with The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018 and The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019.

If our internal team lack the capacity to undertake an assessment, the assessment will be undertaken by a commissioned independent social worker who has been selected for their experience and competence. The majority of our independent assessors have been carrying out assessments for us for at least 2 years.

Assessors are provided with supervision and guidance from our centralised assessment service, who manage all aspects of the assessment process via a regional Assessment Manager for Wales.

Prior to an assessment commencing, all applicants 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 e.g. may present a risk (as 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 Regional Manager will have a discussion with the Assessment Manager and the applicants will be written to, 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 fostering assessment (we use the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F format) report covers:-

- The applicant's 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, all of our assessments are considered by our Fostering 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 written to confirming their appointment as an agency carer and to provide details of their terms of approval; they are also provided with a Foster Carer Agreement (and are asked to sign it) which outlines the expectations in respect of both the carer and our agency.

Foster carers are also provided with further information and procedures which cover all aspects of the fostering task.

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. We offer courses both face-to-face and via our online training management system, 'Shine'.

Review and Terminations of Approval

Our agency must undertake a reviews of a carers approval on an annual basis and / 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 a manager. For reviews involving complaints and allegations, on occasion the agency may externally commission an independent chair if this is deemed beneficial.

The agency will only propose to permanently amend a foster carers terms of approval following a review and in such circumstances, reviews are presented to our Fostering Panel.

Reviews are also presented to our Fostering Panel following the first year of fostering and after any significant event, including complaints or allegations. Carers are invited to attend and encouraged to do so. Where a change of approval is proposed and the carer hasn't already given their written consent to the change, our agency will issue a 'qualifying determination' letter which provide details of the carer's 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 other members of the fostering household and the foster child's birth 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 our Agency Decision Maker (ADM) to seek their approval. The carer will then receive confirmation of ADM's decision in writing.

Independent Fostering Panel Members

The Independent Chairperson of our Fostering Panel is an experienced Social Worker with a background of working in children's services spanning many years. There is a variety of experience within our Central List of Panel members including education, youth housing, a care experienced adult, a foster carer for an LA, an independent social worker and a Police Officer (who also has experienced of adoption).

In support of our Independent members, our Practice Manager, Ann-Marie Davies takes the role of Panel Advisor and our Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is an experienced practitioner and a member of our central Quality Assurance team. Our Panel Advisor is a Welsh speaker. Some of our staff also sit on the Panel on occasion.

Independent Panel members are recruited and applications are shortlisted depending on experience. An induction programme for panel members is in place and all records relating to panel members are held securely and are kept up to date.

The panel membership pool is diverse however, many are in their third term on Panel (which means they will need to leave at the end of their current term) so we are in the process of recruiting new members onto our the Central List (and it is hoped that this will also add further diversity to the group).

Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

In accordance with The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019 and the Statutory Guidance to the Regulations 2019, 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 are asked to remember that the welfare of the child remains paramount at all times.

Role of the Supervising Social Worker

Our Supervising Social Workers will: -

- Undertake regular supervision (normally once per month unless otherwise agreed by the managers and any responsible local authority) and will undertaken more if this is identified as needed and / or was 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 as and when necessary (as although no longer a legislative requirement in Wales, we maintain this practice as we believe this to be a Safeguarding measure).
- Carry out a fostering bedroom check at least every three months
- Wherever possible, be present when children are placed and ensure that all of the child's 'Child Looked After' (CLA) documentation is received.
- Ensure that the child in placement is seen quarterly (at a minimum) and that children's views are sought and recorded.
- Complete the Annual Foster Carer Review (and any other reviews that may be required).
- Regularly review the training needs of the foster carer and oversee their training and development plan.
- undertake a Health and Safety inspection as part of the Foster Carer Review process (and whenever there are a change of circumstance that indicate this is required) using the health and safety check list.
- Ensure the carer's Form F and their profile 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 'Child Looked After' (CLA) Reviews and other Statutory Meetings.
- Inform their line manager of matters covered in schedule 3 of the Fostering Regulations 2019 or of any complaints or concerns raised immediately.
- Inform the Designated Lead for Safeguarding / Regional Manager of any safeguarding concerns raised immediately.
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant legislation and good practice guidelines for example, The Children's Act 1989 and 2004, The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 Part 6, The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018, The Regulated

Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019, the Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services, The Regulations 2019, Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

- Work in accordance with the agency's policies and procedures.

Support Out of Hours

Foster carers undertake a highly demanding role that continues 24/7. Our agency 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 is undertaken on a rota basis by our Supervising social Workers. 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 have access to a support group in their locality. Groups meet regularly and are facilitated by the social workers in the area. Often managers will also attend these groups. This provides and the opportunity for foster carers to network within the fostering peer group; to share skills and experiences; and to offer and receive support as well as giving an opportunity to raise topics of interest. The groups are a way of connecting foster carers with the agency, sharing of research and best practice and guest speakers are invited at times to share community events, practices, service provision and new ideas. As the support groups are supported by social workers, the supportive environment helps create a safe environment to share ideas and practices. 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, presentations on County Lines and health and well-being.

Foster Carer Forum

The 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. We are also currently in the process of setting up a regional Carer Forum in Wales which we plan will meet on a quarterly basis in varying locations across the region.

Carer Ambassadors / Mentors

We assign one of our carer Ambassadors or 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.

Membership of the Fostering Network

We provide membership of The Fostering Network for every fostering household in the agency.

The Fostering Network 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 via the 4Cs framework utilising the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR); a secure on-line commissioning and matching tool used by 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, our 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 and Placements Social Worker 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 the potential match, and through discussion will identify how the carers can meet the needs of the child. They will then liaise with the Referral Hub Manager and the Placements Social Worker to complete the Matching documentation (which along with explaining why it's felt to

be an appropriate match, will also identify the carers support needs, any risks and a risk assessment). This documentation will then be placed on the child's records and serves to evidence the considerations given for the match and the decision to make the offer.

The Referral Coordinator will then complete the Expression of Interest form via the CCSR (or will respond via email if the placement request wasn't via the All Wales framework). 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 Referral Hub 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 Hub Manager or one of his team 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 / Wales 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

We are able to demonstrate a strong commitment to learning and development across our employees and foster carers. All of our staff and carers are required to complete Safeguarding training.

Continuing Professional Development is a requirement of registration for social workers and we take responsibility for ensuring appropriate training opportunities are provided.

Through induction, during formal supervision and at annual appraisals, our staff can 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.

All of our social workers are expected to undertake Therapeutic Parenting training to provide them with the skills and knowledge to fully understand and support foster carers who look after children who have experienced developmental trauma. Regular training is also provided in respect of Safeguarding and social workers are also expected to complete a course on Child Exploitation and the

Government's Prevent training on radicalisation.

Individual learning needs are tailored toward career development, alongside the development of any specialism that a social worker may be interested in. 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 also encouraged to complete management training with the opportunity to gain certified qualifications in this area.

Support staff in the Welsh registered office are also provided with training appropriate to their role for example, all new employees are expected to complete online training on Equality and Diversity and a foundation Safeguarding course. In the past the team 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

We welcome the placement of students. We have a track record in providing a stimulating and supportive learning environment, highly valued by the universities and the students themselves. There are currently 2 qualified Practice Teachers in the Welsh team.

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

Training for Foster Carers

We recognise the importance of Continual Professional Development and offer a comprehensive training programme to all of our foster carers. In addition, the agency facilitates seminar topics at support groups, provides online training and access to books and external training courses when appropriate.

All of the training provided 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.

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 our policies.

The training programme runs annually and 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 we use of online training management system and local venues throughout Wales to minimise travel time. We are also keen to acknowledge the transferable skills some carers acquire through their own work-related training.

Carer's training are kept up to date about the carer's attendance at training, seminars and e-learning courses completed and this information is included in their Foster Carer Review reports..

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
- Safeguarding/Child Protection and Safer Caring
- Understand Behaviours
- First Aid

In addition, carers are offered more specialised (Therapeutic Parenting) training around supporting children who have experienced disrupted attachments and developmental trauma.

In recognition of the high numbers of children looked after children who are deemed at risk of exploitation, we also offers ongoing training on this subject to both carers and staff.

A comprehensive training prospectus of both Induction and CPDC (advanced) courses is provided to our foster carers via our online training management system (Shine). Together with their supervising social workers, carers identify and book the most appropriate courses for the year ahead.

Communication

The NFA Group Chief Executive Officer, David Leatherbarrow, sends all staff a weekly electronic newsletter with information and updates across the group of agencies including residential and education group settings. All staff are able to include events and achievements by the children and foster carers for inclusion in the Newsletters.

Our Responsible Individual sends all fostering staff a weekly bulletin, providing information and updates.

Our agency issue a newsletter to our carers on a quarterly basis, again to provide information and updates and also to make them aware of recruitment incentives and competitions.

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

We will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable children and young adults in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

Our Mission

Every day we improve the lives of those we educate and look after, their families and communities through a relentless focus on learning and caring.

Our Values

Open & Honest

- Be fair and transparent.
- Do the right thing.
- Be respectful.

Deliver Promises

- Be accountable.
- Take responsibility.
- Be committed.

Dream Big

- Make positive changes.
- Aspire and Achieve.
- Be ambitious.

Be Inclusive

- Value diversity.
- Create safe, nurturing environments.
- Care about each other and what we do.

OneTeam

Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.



Section 04

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



During 2020, elements of the NFA Cymru / Wales usual practices were reviewed and adapted to new ways of working e.g. since March 2020 our premises were not staffed daily and instead administration staff members visited the building at least once a week to undertake 'housekeeping' tasks. Despite the adaptations required, we were able to utilise technology to allow us to remain fully functional, we continued to provide the full range of services (in accordance with regulatory requirements and agency policy and procedures) and maintain appropriate staffing levels i.e. all other members of the staff team predominantly worked remotely from home.

In Wales, the government advice is to stay at home other than exemptions for certain, specific purposes which are detailed in The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020. Some of these purposes relate to the fostering role, for example, to enable family time for children in care to continue with birth family face to face where necessary.

However, we recognise that just because the exemptions exist, it does not mean that they have to be used and we make decisions to use any exemptions for cases based on the individual circumstances and in the best interest of the child (also taking into consideration the views of the foster family, birth family and the professionals involved to ensure that risks are minimised and nobody is unnecessarily placed at risk).

Where necessary, some agency practices were amended, particularly in the areas relating to travel and social

distancing:-

- Staff team meetings, supervision, attendance at meetings, and learning opportunities
- Foster Carer supervision, Annual Foster Reviews, attendance at meetings, and learning opportunities
- Fostered children & young people Observation' Visits, 'Bedroom Checks', and 'Child Seen Alone' visits
- Discussion, consultation, and engagement activities with foster carers, children & young people
- Foster Carer support groups
- Meetings of our Fostering Panel
- Initial Visits to fostering applicants
- Assessment visits to fostering applicants

The above listed visits, meetings, groups and forums were all enabled to take place virtually, via video conferencing facilities.

Visits to foster homes to meet with foster parents, members of their household, children and young people have been consistently undertaken in person where this was considered to be required e.g. for the purposes of safeguarding children and critical placement support. If it is decided and agreed upon that a face-to-face meeting should happen, extra precautionary measures are taken (such as the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as appropriate) and any arrangements are risk assessed in consideration of the specific circumstances and the latest public health advice.

The short-term amendments stipulated in The Adoption and Fostering (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 were not extensively utilised with the exception of allowing self-declaration for fostering applicants in relation to their own health assessments (but this has been utilised along with a requirement that they then have full health assessments as

soon as is practically possible).

The Covid 19 restrictions enabled us to 'trial' new ways of working and assess the potential benefits for the agency as a whole, its staff, foster carers, children and young people. Our aim, as always, is to provide the highest quality of support and supervision to our staff and foster carers and to connect in a meaningful way with our children and young people to ensure they remain happy, safe, and thriving in our care. We recognise that social work practice is complex and requires flexibility, so rather than being prescriptive, we have empowered our staff to use their professional judgement and deliver a bespoke approach which is tailored to the individual needs of foster carers, children, young people and the staff themselves, whilst still setting out a minimum standard. Therefore, some of the practice amendments implemented as a result of the pandemic will remain in place e.g.:-

- Foster Carer Supervision – for carers with children placed this will continue to be undertaken on a monthly basis but can be completed in person or via a video conference call (with an annual minimum of four supervisions being in person).
- Fostered children and young people 'Observation Visits', 'Bedroom Checks' and 'Child Seen Alone' Visits will take place three-monthly (with a minimum of six-monthly taking place in person).
- Foster Carer support groups taking place in person or via video conferencing.
- Initial Visits to fostering applicants taking place in person or via video conferencing.
- Assessment visits to foster carer applicants taking place via a combination of in person and video conferencing.
- Meetings of our Fostering Panel taking place in person or via video conferencing
- Discussion, consultation, and engagement activities with foster carers, children and young people taking place in person or via video conferencing.
- Staff team meetings, supervision, attendance at meetings and learning opportunities taking place in person or via video conferencing.

Both our staff and carers are able to access counselling services if they would find this beneficial.

Section 05

Staffing Arrangements

We are committed to the employment of suitably qualified, experienced staff and fully understands our duties under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. All of our managers are asked to undertake Safer Recruitment training. A robust induction and training plan is in place for every employee.

The Regional Manager, Kim Perkins, is a qualified Social Worker, holding the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW), the Practice Teaching Award in Social Work and the Post Qualifying Award in Social Work (PQSW) with over 16 years of post-qualifying experience. This includes over 10 years of experience at a management level and in addition to her Social Work qualifications she has a degree in Psychology and holds a Masters in Business Administration (MBA). In respect of continual personal development, she also completes training on a regular basis via our comprehensive in-house training programme.

In addition to formal monthly supervision with the Regional Director, the Regional Manager, along with the other managers within the agency and some of the staff, meet with the Responsible Individual at quarterly Business Review meetings.

The Regional Manager also regularly meets with other Registered and Regional Managers within the NFA Group; this acts as a useful peer-based learning opportunity to share good practice across the organisation.

Our Practice Manager, Ann-Marie Davies, is a qualified social worker (holding a DipSW, the Practice Teaching Award in Social Work and the PQSW) with over 20 years of post-qualifying experience. She also holds an ILM Level 5 Certificate in Leadership and Management, is trained in Dyadic Developmental psychotherapy (DDP 1 and DDP 2) and is 'Achieving Best Evidence' (ABE) trained.

Our Practice Manager has formal monthly supervision with our Regional Manager and in respect of continual personal development, completes training on a regular basis via our comprehensive in-house training programme.

Team Managers

Helen Anderson - is a qualified social worker (Higher National Diploma in Social Work) with over 25 years of post-qualifying experience. She has completed in-house management training in the past and is hoping to undertake further studies in this area in the future.

Colin Drever - is a qualified social worker (DipSW) with 23 years of post-qualifying experience and holds an ILM Level 5

Certificate in Leadership and Management.

Gabe Robinson - is a qualified social worker (Masters in Social Work) with 10 years of post-qualifying experience. He has completed in-house management training in the past and is hoping to undertake further studies in this area in the future.

Steve Watkins - is a qualified social worker (DipSW) with 16 years of post-qualifying experience and holds a Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care.

Our Team Managers have formal monthly supervision with our Practice Manager and continue their professional development by completing training on a regular basis via our in-house programme.

All supervising social workers are qualified and registered with Social Care Wales (SCW). Usually we only recruit social workers with at least 2 years post qualifying experience to ensure they start in post with a high degree of competency (that can then be further built upon through induction and our in-house programme of training).

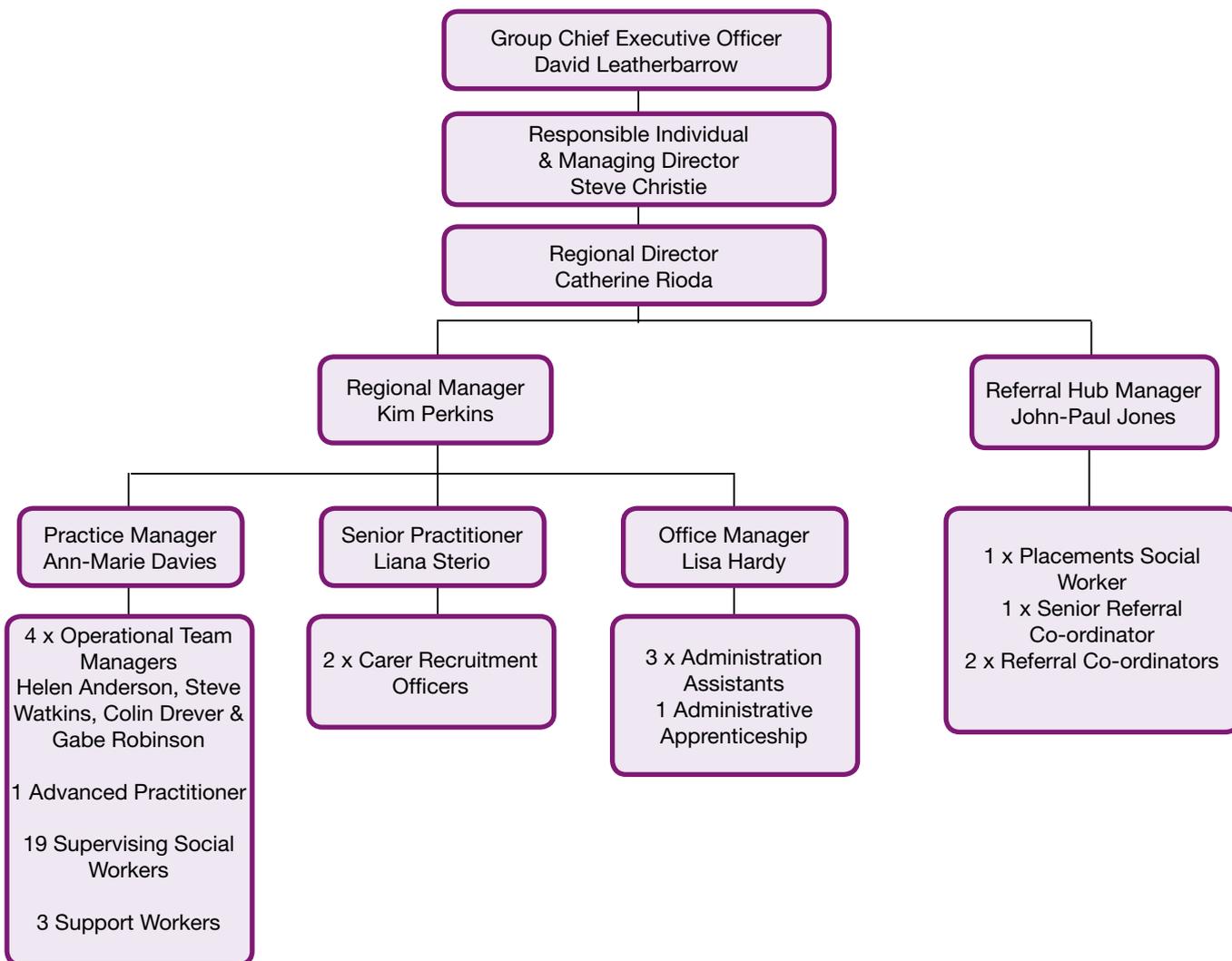
Supervising social workers receive monthly formal supervision from the Team Manager for their area and telephone support as needed. In addition, our social workers meet regularly via their Peer Supervision Group. This group works collaboratively to share new research, good practice and discuss difficult case issues.

Section 06

Staffing Structure



Organisational Structure



Section 07

Governance and Quality Monitoring Arrangements



Responsible Individual-duties and responsibilities

The Responsible Individual follows the service provider's prescribed systems and processes to enable proper oversight of the management, quality, safety and effectiveness of the service; this includes, but is not limited to, ensuring the service:-

- focuses on the needs of the child and supports foster parents.
- listens to children and foster parents.
- responds positively and appropriately to any concerns or complaints.
- does not place children, foster parents or the foster parents' household at unnecessary risk.
- achieves best possible outcomes for children.
- fulfils the statement of purpose.
- has sufficient numbers of staff who are trained, competent and skilled to undertake their role; and has sufficient resources, facilities and equipment.

The Responsible Individual has systems in place to review and assess the way in which the management team implement actions from the findings of internal quality assurance and external inspection reports, within required timescales.

The Responsible Individual holds quarterly Business Review which the agency's managers and some of the other staff attend, undertakes regular monitoring visits to the Registered Office and attends forums and events to meet with staff, foster parents, children and young people. The visits form and maintain an open forum for discussion and ensure the

views, wishes and feelings of staff, fostering families and children are shared and help form part of the agencies policies and procedures.

Contingency arrangements

In the event that the Regional Manager was unable to perform her duties for 3 months or more, the agency would inform the CIW of this absence and the contingency strategy (which would be for another experienced member of the management team to act up to the post of Regional Manager, with additional support from the Regional Director as required and their post to be replaced temporarily with an interim and suitably experienced social work manager). In shorter term absences and annual leave another Registered Manager within the Group will provide cover.

Safeguarding

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. Our agency adhere to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2019

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).

We regularly review and revise our Safeguarding Policy, in accordance with Regulations 20, 21 and 62 of the Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019.

We also understand that the production of a Safeguarding Policy does not in itself lead to children and young people being protected; rather it is how it is implemented, an understanding of Safeguarding and provision of specific training that brings Foster Carers and supervising social workers closer to safeguarding children. However, the policy does demonstrate the steps we are 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 or young person has disclosed a Safeguarding 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.

Safeguarding is integral to all aspects of our operational framework and are relevant to each of our policies and procedures.

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 is also to identify what steps can be put in place to minimise and manage the risk. Risk assessments are updated at least annually and at any point when further information is provided which would indicate an updated assessment is required. 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 Regional Manager provides regular reports to the Regional Director, Responsible Individual and our Performance Board regarding all such concerns.

Our staff take the initiative to request that local authorities convene strategy or professionals' meetings when there is concern about the safety of a child or 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.

Reporting Concerns

Concerns about standards of care issues or allegations against carers are reported in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy. Our managers oversee 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. Our Regional Manager and our Practice Manager ensure that notifications are submitted to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) where appropriate via their online portal.

Carers subject to allegations of abuse or standards of care are can access independent support and advice, including legal assistance via the Fostering Network.

Following investigation, all cases are presented to our Fostering Panel 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 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) are considered by the Panel, the Regional Manager, our Responsible Individual and our Performance Board.

Quality Assurance

We have a National Director of Quality Assurance and a centralised Quality Assurance Department which includes and a Quality Assurance Manager covering each of the NFA

Regions, including 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 IT system ensures consistency and improvement of safe working practices and services that meet customer's qualitative and regulatory requirements. The systems we utilise 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.

We also have systems in place designed to alert to managers issues such as late recordings or overdue review.

In accordance with the requirements of Regulation 63 of The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019, the Regional Manager completed a Quality of Care Review report for our Responsible Individual every 6 months. The Quality of Care Review measures the service's performance against its aims and objectives, monitors and analyses safeguarding matters and other types of notification, Whistleblowing concerns and complaints, as well as evaluating outcomes and achievements. The Review provides an opportunity to champion good practice and identify areas for further development that can then be addressed.

Complaints and Representations

We regularly review and revise our Complaints and Representations Policy and Procedure. This document is in accordance with Regulation 42 of The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019 and provides the framework within which complaints and representations are managed.

The Regional Manager 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 Regional 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, employees, by other organisations and their employees and by members of the public.

A foster child or their family receiving a service from us commissioned by a local authority may also complain directly to the respective local authority at any time. Where the complaint involves both our agency and the respective local authority, an agreement will be reached between the two parties as to which agency will lead on the investigation of the complaint. Our 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, our agency will assist in the provision of advocacy and / or 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 way in which our agency has followed the 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.

If staff have concerns and wish to share information in a confidential way, the National Fostering Group also operates a whistleblowing process which enables anyone to raise concerns directly with a member of the executive team or by phone or online using our SafeCall service.

Financial Position

Our 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

Our Group operates within a number of Framework Contracts for Independent Fostering agencies across the UK. In Wales, the majority of our placements are made via the All Wales Framework Agreement overseen by the 4Cs.

We take pride in working in an ethical and transparent way in regards to our 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 brothers and sisters who have been placed together. Through the Framework review process in Wales, our agency 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 discussions and 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 our agency's 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 and this is also referenced in the Foster Carer Agreement.

All foster carers are classed as 'Self-Employed' and as such must ensure they pay their own tax and national insurance contributions. Detailed financial information and guidance is supplied to foster carers and an annual statement is provided for tax purposes. Most expenses incurred when fostering are covered by the fostering allowance and fee paid to foster carers vary according to the type of placement. The fostering allowance is not payable when there is no child in placement.

Section 08

Contacts



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Email post@childcomwales.org.uk

Twitter - @childcomwales

Facebook - Children's Commissioner for Wales

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Closed Saturday - Sunday and on bank holidays.

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