

**maethu  
cymru**

Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

**foster  
wales**

Bridgend

# **Foster Carers Handbook**

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# SECTION 1

## WELCOME

Welcome to Foster Wales Bridgend and your foster carer's pack. This pack is designed to give you the information you need on Fostering for Bridgend in a way that we hope you will find helpful.

There are different types of information inside: some basic to the service, some on looking after children and young people, what we can expect of you and what you can expect of us and a lot of practical information that you will need.

This serves as a general guide across all the different fostering services that are on offer within BCBC:-

- General Fostering (short term, long term, emergency and respite care)
- Connected Persons (family members or friends who have agreed to look after a child who is unable to remain in the care of their parents under a fostering arrangement)
- Transitional Fostering (complex short term placements)
- Parent and Child Fostering (supporting a mother or father and their child within a foster placement)
- Family Link (supporting children with disabilities with short breaks and support)
- Support Care (supporting children who are remaining in the care of their parents with visits to the home)

Please read through the handbook carefully and do talk to your Supervising Social Worker or any team members about any queries you may have.

We aim to update the contents from time to time; we would welcome your comments and suggestions.

We hope you enjoy fostering for Bridgend and look forward to working with you.



# SECTION 2

## SUPPORT TO FOSTER CARERS

## Support to Foster Carers

As a foster carer you will receive regular support from your Supervising Social Worker at Bridgend Fostering Team. This will include:

### Supervision

You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will agree frequency of supervision with you depending upon your needs, this may vary over your fostering career. Between visits your Supervising Social Worker is available by phone for any issues or queries that cannot wait for supervision. If your Social Worker is not available there is a Duty Social Worker available everyday who can support you. It is very important that you advise the Duty Social Worker of what issue you have when you call so that they can ensure you receive timely support.

### Liaison Carers

These are experienced foster carers who are available to support you with queries, concerns and emotional support. The Liaison Carers run regular coffee mornings so that you can link in with other foster carers and provide support to one another. Liaison Carers are also on hand to support you to attend meetings with the team, or if you experience an allegation. Liaison carers are provided with foster carers contact details in order to invite them to coffee mornings, events or to seek feedback about the fostering service.

### EDT

EDT is the Emergency Duty Team, they are a dedicated team who are on-hand to provide out of hours support for emergency situations, they are available after office hours and at weekends.

### Training

All foster carers are required to undertake at least 2 training courses or equivalent to continue to be approved as foster carers. Training can be evidenced by attending formal training sessions run by the team or when offered by external organisations, accessing online training, suitable TV programmes or additional reading. Any training undertaken needs to be discussed and recorded within your supervision to evidence this for your annual review and demonstrate your learning and development. It is very important that you keep up to date with changes in legislation, policies, procedures and good practice. This in turn will enable you to best support the children and young people in your care. If training is not kept up to date the fostering team will not recommend continued approval at panel during your annual review. It is important that your supervising social worker is made aware of any issues that may impact on your attendance at training.

### Placement Support Worker

The Placement Support Worker is a dedicated worker who offers individual support to carers as needed via visits, phone calls and 1:1 training. Referrals are made to the worker by supervising social workers in the fostering team, or at the request of a senior as part of a placement support meeting.

### Accommodation and Permanence Panel

Accommodation and Permanence Panel is a multi-disciplinary meeting which takes place regularly and will review requests for additional support for children from their social workers. If children in placement have specific needs requiring specialist intervention, these will be considered here. This can include outreach support, specialist support from services such as Taith for example (services

provided for children who have experienced issues related to sexual abuse), regular respite, specialist training and intervention.

### Newsletters

Newsletters are regularly sent out by the fostering team to keep you informed of events and news items relating to fostering and the local authority, also to invite you to consultation events. If there is anything you would like to include in the newsletters, please let your Supervising Social Worker know. It is very important that you keep your email address details up to date to receive these letters.

### Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. They support foster carers and other professionals by delivering training, learning, research, advice and information services. All Bridgend Foster Carers have individual Fostering Network membership as part of the package of support from BCBC. They have a dedicated website which contains information about their services as well as contact details.

### Foster Panel

Foster panel considers applications for approval and recommends whether or not a person/ persons are suitable to act as a foster carer. Where the panel recommend approval it also recommends the terms on which this approval is given. The recommendations of the Panel are ratified by the Head of Childrens Services, this usually takes place 2 weeks after the panel date. Once approved you will receive a Foster Care Agreement. This is the formal contract between yourselves as foster carers and BCBC and outlines the expectations upon you and the local authority as well as your approval terms.



The Foster Panel is made up of a Panel Chair, who directs the discussion, a Panel Advisor from the fostering team to address any social work queries the members may have and professionals from various agencies.

### Temporary Change of Approval

As a foster carer there will be times when the fostering team may ask you to support a child or young person who is outside of your approval status. If you are in agreement with the arrangement, your Supervising Social Worker is able to agree a temporary change of your approval with the consent of the Head of Childrens Services. Most often temporary approvals are used to enable foster carers to support an additional child in the home, e.g. to increase a carers approval from 2 placements to 3 in order for a sibling group of 3 children to be placed together.

Foster carers can be approved for a maximum of 3 placements, though in exceptional circumstances this can be increased to enable the placement of siblings.

### Respite Requests

We want children to experience the least amount of disruption possible and to be part of family life. On those occasions where respite may be required, these need to be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker at the earliest possible opportunity. This will allow the Placements team the time to identify an appropriate match. The amount of respite requested will be monitored and considered within your annual review. Respite should also be avoided during periods that are stressful or important for children, such as near to their GCSE's. If you have family or friends who are part of your support network, are familiar to the children and willing to offer support we are able to undertake a proportionate assessment and complete basic checks to enable them to care for children for a period of respite. This is very positive for the children as it is what would happen in average family life. The amount of respite requested by a carer is recorded and will be taken into

account when recommending approval terms at the point of annual review.

### Overnight Stays

Decisions on overnight stays, with age appropriate friends, should in most circumstances be delegated to foster parents/carers. Where arrangements for overnights stays are already in existence, these should be written into the Placement Plan or Foster Placement Agreement

The guiding principle is that looked after children should as far as possible be granted the same permissions to take part in acceptable age appropriate peer activities, such as staying with friends, as would reasonably be granted by the parents of their peers. Parents make judgements on whether or not there are known risks to staying in a particular household or in staying overnight in particular circumstances, and similar judgements should normally be made for children in foster or residential care by their responsible carers. Judgements should be based on a reasonable assessment of risks. You should be informed of any individuals, addresses or areas that may place the young person at risk.

For any proposed planned overnight stay you will need to consult with the Child's Social Worker and obtain the appropriate information from the parents/guardian of the friend.

You will need to liaise with the friend's parents to confirm:

- They are aware the invitation has been issued.
- They are in agreement to the invitation.
- The agreed duration of visit by all parties.
- Acceptable activities during the visit.
- They are aware that children cannot share a bed

Foster carers should ensure that the young person is transported to and collected from the address specified for the overnight visit and confirm that adults are present during the overnight stay.

If the young person does not return as agreed all efforts should be made to establish their whereabouts. Any failure to return will render the young person Absent without Authority and EDT/Social Worker, and Police need to be notified.

- Any requests for more than an overnight stay requires further discussion between relevant parties. The 23 hour rule applies whereas a looked after child/young person is not able to stay in a non-regulated placement for longer than 23 hours.
- If there is good reason to consider a young person would be at risk staying in a particular household, the young person's social worker or placing authority may decide to make further enquiries including a PNC or DBS check before a decision is taken on the proposed overnight stay

Where requests for unplanned overnight stays are made, carers are expected to make a judgement on whether or not there are known risks to staying in a particular household or in staying overnight in particular circumstances. Judgements should be made on a reasonable assessment of risk. To assist in assessing the appropriateness of an occasional overnight stay with friends you will need to liaise with the friends' parents as above, but also consider the following:

- Are there any relevant restrictions contained in the young person's care plan or placement agreement, or any court orders, which restrict the young person from having particular overnight stays?
- Are there any factors in the young person's past experiences or behaviour, which would preclude overnight stays?
- Are there any grounds for concern that the young person may be at significant risk in the household concerned or from the activities proposed.
- What is known about the purpose of the overnight stay
- The length of stay
- The age and level of understanding of the young person

Foster carers should still inform the child/young person's social worker at the earliest opportunity that this overnight arrangement has taken place.

### Overnight stays at the Foster Carers home

Where children/young people request for a friend to stay overnight the Foster Carers should still inform their supervising social worker at the earliest opportunity and discuss the appropriate safe care arrangements that will need to be implemented.

Under no circumstances are children permitted to share a bed, the foster carer will need to inform their social worker of the sleeping arrangements and this needs to be recorded in foster carer recordings.

# SECTION 3

**FAMILY TIME (CONTACT)**

### Family Time (contact)

Refers to ways fostered children remain connected with people who are important to them, such as their parents, siblings and extended family. It can be face-to-face meetings, through letters, telephone calls, email and social networks like Skype. Contact can be a very rewarding experience for children and can help them maintain a sense of identity and understanding of their past. Contact can also be a difficult emotional experience for children and their foster carers for which you and the children will need support.

Contact arrangements are set out within the child's care plan, these are subject to regular review to ensure that the arrangements are meeting the needs of the child/ren. There are times where contact arrangements are set by the court within care proceedings. Often contact arrangements during court proceedings can be high frequency as the court has yet to decide the permanent care plan for the child and parents/ family members may be subject to assessment to care for the child. In these circumstances contact is usually supervised away from the placement by a member of the local authority.

Foster carers must promote contact between children and their birth families or others who are significant to them in accordance with their care plan.

Contact arrangements can sometimes involve restrictions that can be particularly difficult for connected persons foster carers to manage. The welfare needs of the child can mean that members of the family or friends can be asked not to attend the placement and this can be an emotional time (this can sometimes happen in general fostering placements too). It is important to speak with your supervising social worker about this, seek peer support at coffee mornings for connected carers or make contact with the liaison carer if you need support with this.

There will be times where children have contact with people who have abused them. It is important that you have all the information you need to support the child/ren with such contacts and ensure that they are emotionally supported with these arrangements. There may be times where the local authority is unaware that a person the child is having contact with has abused them. This is where your recordings and discussions within your supervision about contact can be key. If you observe any significant changes in behaviour or the child/ren disclose any information of concern it is vital that this is communicated to their social worker at the earliest opportunity to address the concerns or so that plans can be put in place to best support the child with contact.

It can be challenging promoting contact between a child and a person who has caused them harm. It is important that you discuss your personal feelings within supervision and promote contact between the child and their family. The child's wishes and feelings about contact need to be known and it can be very difficult for the right decisions to be made about contact if the child/ren are not expressing their own views. Advocacy support can be very beneficial for discussions about contact.

Sometimes contact takes place at the foster placement. It is important that any arrangements take into account other members of the household which may include other placed children or your own children. Contact arrangements are usually supported by a written agreement to ensure everyone is clear

about what the expectations are and how to raise any concerns. This is essential if you have agreed to supervise the contact.

It is particularly important that sibling contact is promoted in cases where we have been unable or where it is not in-keeping with children needs for siblings to be placed together. It is rare that sibling contact would need to be supervised by the local authority as it can negatively impact on the quality of the contact. Where possible contact should be as natural as possible and managed with the least restrictive arrangements, where the risks allow this. As such it is expected that foster carers who are supporting siblings who have been separated make suitable arrangements to support regular informal contact between them. These expectations should be discussed and agreed with you at the earliest opportunity and will be subject to regular review.

Your supervising social worker and the child's social worker will discuss contact arrangements with you and provide advice and guidance. There may be times for example where it is agreed not to inform a child in advance of contact where a family member has been unreliable, other times there may be specific preparation that a child may need for contact.

Where there are young children and babies in placement it is fundamental that the arrangements for providing clothing, food and nappies are discussed and agreed in advance. Where families are being assessed to care for children there may be times where they are expected to anticipate the children's needs during contact and provide for them as part of their assessment. Where a decision about a child's permanence has already been made it is likely the carer would be asked to provide for the child. There may be times where you are asked to attend the contact to provide support to a child who is struggling with the arrangements. Contact can be very individual and tailored to the children's needs, even siblings can sometimes have different arrangements for contact. Your supervising social worker will discuss contact with you in every supervision to ensure that you are supported.



# SECTION 4

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## Finances

### Fostering Allowance

These provide Foster Carers with an allowance that covers the cost of caring for a looked after child. **Please note, this is for the child and there is a recommendation of how this allowance should be spent.**

The Fostering allowance is paid at the level recommended by the Welsh Government. It bases its recommendations for payments on an estimation of the actual costs of looking after a child. The level of the maintenance allowance will be according to the child's age.

**Please see breakdown of Foster Carers allowances based on age of child / young person on Foster Wales Bridgend Website.**

## Holidays for Looked After Children

**Please note the Local Authority does not encourage children to be taken on holiday during school term time and you will** also need to inform the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker of any holiday arrangements as far in advance as possible, in case court/parents need to be advised/consulted.

If you are intending to take children/young people abroad, you must have a letter of authority from the Local Authority, which will require the signature of a Senior Manager. The application form must be signed either by a parent with Parental Responsibility, or by a Local Authority Senior Manager.

With these formalities in mind you should give the child's/young person's Social Worker plenty of notice. Once the child/young person has a passport the matter should be simplified, however please allow enough time for the parents to be consulted.

## Savings For Children

When the permanence plan for the child/young person has been identified at their 2<sup>nd</sup> review, Foster Carers should open a bank account for the child/young person in their care. This account must be entirely separate from others and only in relation to that individual child.

All Foster Carers are encouraged to save in this account for the child/young person in their care. In some cases all or some of the pocket money can be saved. For example a baby may not need the pocket money allocated every week: this amount can be transferred into the savings account. If a child/young person is to return or leave the fostering placement, all monies along with a statement, are to be transferred with the child/young person. It will assist the child to learn money management skills if they are with you when you open the account so they can see what is required.

Within supervision the supervising social worker will need to monitor the savings account of children within your care, this will include monitoring the amount of money in the account and viewing statements.

The savings belong to the child and cannot be used without the expressed consent of the child. This can only be given with the oversight of their social worker and must be meticulously recorded. For example, it must include the amount agreed to be used, the purpose for which it is used, the balances of the account before and after and the discussion, consent and agreement of all parties. When a child leaves placement savings cannot be withheld under any circumstances.

### DLA

There must be a formal agreement/ plan in place with the Child's Social Worker with regard to DLA and how it may be spent. DLA payments should be kept in a separate bank account and records with receipts kept to evidence how this is being utilised. Guidance for DLA indicates that it cannot be saved and needs to be utilised weekly to support the child with their needs.

### Clothing

Within the weekly fostering allowance there is an element for the purchase of clothing, however you may be provided with an initial clothing allowance at the commencement of a placement due to lack of clothing or inappropriate clothing. This request should be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker as this is not an automatic allowance and will be based on individual need.

### Dinner money

This is included in the fostering allowance, to also include packed lunches.

### Pocket money

This is included in the fostering allowance and should be discussed with your supervising social worker in supervision.

### Travel costs

Mileage costs are only paid where BCBC have requested that you transport the fostered child to a specific location e.g. health appointments, school, contact sessions or if you are attending a professional meeting on behalf of the child etc. Travel costs are not applicable for family outings, leisure pursuits, shopping etc.

You must notify your insurance company that you are a Foster Carer and include business use on your vehicle policy. Mileage claims will not be reimbursed unless you show proof to your Supervising Social Worker, the addition of business use does not usually incur a cost.

All mileage claims need to be completed on a monthly basis, with milometer readings. Petrol receipts should be retained by yourself for tax purposes. Forms which are over **3 months** old or incorrectly completed cannot and will not be reimbursed.

Reimbursement for other travelling costs, eg. train/bus tickets, for similar journeys are also available. You should consult your Supervising Social Worker for advice on reclaiming such expenses, wherever possible in advance of the journey being undertaken. Always keep your receipts.

### Methods of payment

Payments will be made by direct payment into your bank account, which is the preferable option.

There may be an occasion when an overpayment is made to you due to the child/young person moving from your care. Please note it is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to inform your Supervising Social Worker ASAP, (as you would, if on occasions, there is a problem with any underpayment).

### Income Tax

As a Foster Carer the Inland Revenue treats you as being **self employed**, as you get income from providing foster care to children / young people, you must therefore, register as self-employed with HMRC. This will entitle you to foster care relief and you are able to earn £10 000 before

you will be taxed as well as £200 per child per week before the age of 11 and £250 per child per week after. It will be a very unusual situation if a carer finds themselves being asked to pay any tax.

### Income Support and Working Tax Credit

Foster carers are able to claim for Income Support or Working Tax Credit. Most foster carers will be better off claiming Income Support than getting Working Tax Credits, but make sure you get expert advice, for example from the Citizen's Advice Bureau and/or contact the Tax Credits Helpline on 0345 300 3900., to ensure you make the right choice in your particular circumstances. In the weeks when you don't have a child in placement, you can no longer claim Income Support (unless you can claim Income Support for another reason, for example if you are a single parent with a child under age five or you are getting carers allowance).

### Means-Tested Benefits

Fostered children are not counted as part of your household when any means-tested benefits are calculated. Equally, the allowances and fees from fostering are not counted as income when calculating any of the following means-tested benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Support

These benefits as well as tax credits, and except for help with council tax, are being phased out between 2014 and 2018 and replaced by a new benefit called Universal Credit.

Many foster carers are in a unique position, as you can choose whether to be deemed as 'working', and claim Working Tax Credit, or 'not working' and claim Income Support (normally if you are a single foster carer).

### Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits

Foster carers cannot claim Child Benefit for any fostered children who are placed with them. However, you can claim Child Benefit for your own children, or other children who live with you (who are not fostered). To find out more contact the Child Benefit Helpdesk: 0300 200 3100 or visit HMRC's website.

Child Tax Credit is paid to you if you are responsible for a child or young person who normally lives with you. Foster carers cannot claim Child Tax Credit for any fostered child they are caring for because they are provided with a fostering allowance which must cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with them. If a foster carer finds out they are getting Child Tax Credit for a foster child we would advise them to not spend the money, keep it to one side and alert HMRC.

### Insurance

You MUST notify your insurance company that you are fostering, this does not normally incur a charge.

The Local Authority has some insurance provision for all Foster Carers. This is paid in respect of significant damages which are incurred to your possessions by the child/young person placed with you.

If you need to make a claim you must notify your Supervising Social Worker, as representative to the Insurance officer – they may make arrangements to come out and view the loss/damage.

If your premiums rise as a result of making a claim, the Local Authority may pay the difference if it is due to a claim being made for a child you are caring for.

### Mobile phones for children

Where it is felt appropriate for children in placement to own a mobile phone we recommend that these are pay as you go, rather than a contract. This will enable you to teach the young person about managing finances and will avoid potential issues relating to escalating costs. The local authority will not accept responsibility for costs of mobile phones or their use.

If you choose to take out a contract for a child in placement who child moves or changes placement within a contract period the responsibility for this contract and payments will remain with the foster carer who took out the contract.

# SECTION 5

## **MEETINGS INVOLVED WITH LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**



## Meetings involved with Looked After Children

There are two ways child/ren come into foster care, planned or in an emergency. In the first instance it's with the agreement of the parents and plans are made for introductions to take place for all involved to meet and get to know each other. The child has the opportunity to meet the foster carer and see where they live and then a date is arranged for the child to move to the carer.

Sometimes if appropriate, parents are involved in the introductions and moving of their child to the placement. In the latter instance introductions cannot take place and a child is placed immediately for their own safety.

When the child/ren is placed their social worker will give you forms with information on it about the child, family members, school and health. It is very important these forms are received by carers on the day the child is placed with you. Your Supervising Social Worker, or in their absence the Duty Worker for the Fostering Team will provide you with Placement and Safe Care agreements for the children placed with you.

It is very important that you are informed of any language and communication needs that a child may have. The local authority must ensure that children can meaningfully communicate with their carers, this may include aids, adaptations or training in alternative communication methods. It is important that children are supported to participate in care planning and review during their foster placement and make decisions about the way care and support is provided to them.

## Placement Planning Meeting.

Within the first week of a child being placed with you a Placement Planning Meeting is arranged where the child/childrens' social worker, foster carers, supervising social worker and child/ young person (where

appropriate) meet to discuss issues about the child/ young person staying with you and to set ground rules and expectations of the carers and the child/ young person. Parents will also attend this meeting depending on the circumstances. For example the meeting looks at the daily routines, bedtimes, dietary needs, meal times, hygiene, schooling, pocket money, hobbies, contact arrangements, health issues.

Where children are moving in a planned way between foster placements a placement planning meeting should take place before the placement is made and should include a plan of introductions for the child to meet the carer and visit the placement. The frequency and length of introductions varies in accordance with the individual needs of the child and must take into account their wishes and feelings.

### Statutory visits

Every child / young person in a foster home must be visited at prescribed intervals by a social worker. The child/ young person may be seen alone and the social worker will record the visit in writing, on the health, welfare, conduct and progress of the child/ young person in placement and on the condition of the foster carer's home and will need to see the child / young person's bedroom.

The social worker must visit the child/ young person within 1 week of the placement and immediately if there should be a complaint or allegation. Then at least every 6 weeks for the first year, followed by intervals of 8 weeks thereafter. This can increase to quarterly in some cases.

### Looked After Children's Reviews

The review is held within a month of the child/ young person being placed with you. This meeting involves education, health, parents, child/young person, social worker, foster carer, supervising social worker and any other professional that may be involved with the child. An independent reviewing officer will chair this meeting to review how the placement is

going. At this meeting the Care Plan for the child/ young person can be set or changed. These reviews are usually held in the foster carer's home unless it is deemed necessary to be held at a neutral venue for safety reasons. Subsequently, the situation is reviewed in 3 months time then every 6 months thereafter to check how things are going.

Shortly before each review you will be sent a consultation document to complete asking you for your views and comments on how the placement is going. The child/ young person in placement will also have a right to have their views heard and it is important to encourage them to take an active part in their review, as well as completing their consultation document.

An independent reviewing officer will chair the review and a report will be completed summarising the review and everyone attending will receive a copy.

Occasionally Looked After Children are on the Child Protection Register. If this is the case there will be a combination of Child Protection Case Conferences, Planning Meetings and Core Group Meetings to monitor the care plan for the child/ young person. Your supervising social worker will advise and support you through these procedures.

### Advocacy

When a child or young person becomes Looked After or enters the Child Protection arena he/she should be actively offered advocacy support. Advocacy is about having someone to listen to you. It can help you to tell the people who make decisions about your life what you think and how you feel. An advocate may visit the child in placement and will attend Reviews and meetings either with or on behalf of the child.

The offer is usually extended by the social worker and should inform the child/young person that an independent advocate can meet with them to explain the role of advocacy and how it can provide support through the Looked After and Child Protection system.

The Active Offer referrer should seek consent from the child/young person for a referral to be made. When a child/young person accepts the Active Offer, please contact TGP Cymru on: 01443 805940 • Freephone: 0800 4703930.

The advocate is independent – they don't work for Social Services or Health or Education.

They can meet with the child/ young person to tell them about advocacy and if they decide they don't want advocacy that is just fine.

The advocacy service is confidential – they only share what the child wants them to, unless they are in danger.

# SECTION 6

## **PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

### Promoting Educational Achievement

Support for education is an essential part of every carer's role. There is shared responsibility with the Foster Carers to ensure Children and Young People of statutory school age have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. Positive home-school links are seen as enhancing education life chances for all pupils, and it is essential that corporate parenting replicates the same benefits for people in public care. Carers are expected to take an active part in education planning and have a clear understanding of who to communicate with at school and within the L.E.A. Carers are to liaise closely with the school through the designated teacher, who they should inform when the young person starts at the school.

They are expected to be involved in monitoring and supporting the targets set out in the young person's Personal Education Plan of which they should have a copy and will receive advice on how to best promote educational progress.

Children and young people are encouraged to study and the foster carer is to take a close and supportive role in their educational progress. Carers are expected to ensure young people complete homework and tasks, by checking the child's homework diary/planner regularly, also using this as a tool to communicate daily with class teachers. It is expected that carers should provide ready access to the equipment young people need to take to school. They should also have access to equipment in the home so that they can read, write, draw and follow up their own interests and schoolwork at home and be provided with a suitable environment in which to do so.

As foster carers you have a primary responsibility for, and a major influence upon regular attendance and any attendance issues should be pursued immediately. Carers are expected to attend school events, including parent's evenings, meetings, support for extracurricular activities etc. (parents may also attend). Carers are expected to encourage and support the importance of the child's education and help them to get the best out of educational opportunities.

Carers are expected to be advocates for the young people they care for and to work in partnership with schools and the LEA in helping the foster child/ren reach their full potential.

Foster carers are expected to attend any meetings called by the school to address any immediate issues e.g. bullying or mis-conduct. It is crucial to address such issues immediately and monitor closely to ensure sure there are no further incidents. Please liaise with the child/ren's social worker as well as your supervising social worker.

### Attendance

Regular attendance is vital if a child is to make the most of school, and it is a parental responsibility. This cannot be stressed enough. Research has shown that attendance below 90% will significantly affect performance at school. The only acceptable reason for extended absence is medical. If a child is absent, the carers must contact the school. They should send a note with the child when he/she returns, and the school can ask for a medical certificate if they wish. Schools usually keep computerised

records of attendance and this is accessible to carers if they want to check.

If you suspect poor attendance, it is important to contact either the designated teacher, or a Head of Year. The school may phone you if the child is absent (unless you provide a letter to cover that absence). Early intervention is crucial. The Educational Welfare Officer (E.W.O) for Looked After Children or the E.W.O attached to the school is there to help, if attendance has become a serious problem, or the school has not been able to contact the carer. (The E.W.O has duties that specifically relate to ensuring good attendance at school.) If a child is ill for a week or longer, and is able to work, the school should be asked to send work home for them to complete.

### Homework

Junior and Secondary Schools will have a homework policy in place. This details what is expected of teachers, carers and children. As a foster carer you should be provided with this by the school. Practice will vary but Primary (Junior) schools will often give homework tasks to children, according to their policy.

Secondary schools usually provide a homework diary / timetable for children and staff. This details what subjects will be set during which day and how long this will take. Children will normally have a diary of some sort (often called a planner). This should be used by them to record their homework and other information and is useful contact between home and school. Form teachers are usually expected to check and sign these regularly, as well as the carer.

For key stage 4, many schools will provide a coursework timetable, outlining when coursework for GCSE and other exams has to be completed. In key stage 4, a lot of homework revolves around completion of coursework, often with tasks set over many weeks, and it is vital that young people structure this carefully.

### Rules for Homework:

Young people must record homework carefully in their planner/diary detailing tasks and completion dates.

It is useful if a regular time is set aside each day for completion of homework.

Homework must not be done watching television or where young people can be distracted.

Ideally homework should be completed in a well-lit quiet area.

The child should not do two things at once; they should either be focussed on their work or relaxing. It doesn't work trying to do both things at the same time.

There must be a balance between work and play.

If you feel that your child is not getting enough homework, or the planner is not being filled in, please contact the class teacher (Primary), Head of Year (Secondary) or the designated teacher.

### Personal Educational Plans (PEP)

The Personal Education Plan will be required for all Looked After Children and a borough wide format is in use. The PEP will need to be initiated by the designated teacher, in co-ordination with the young person, parents, other teachers, carers and Social Worker. This must be done within 20 days of a Looked After Child entering foster care or changing school. The plan should be completed in time for the 28-day review, and at 3 months and 6 months, and will be part of the care plan. The PEP should include the following: -

Contact and other information about the child.

An achievement record.

Development and educational needs.

Short term plans.

Long term plans and aspirations.

If you require any further information on the education of the child / young person you are caring for you can contact the child/ren's social



worker and it also is important to keep your supervising social worker informed of any concerns / issues.

## Education Engagement Team

To offer support and a direct point of contact for children, schools families and professionals for school aged children who fall within one or more vulnerable groups. The EET will undertake the roles and responsibilities of the local authority named education engagement coordinator for:

- o looked after children;
- o safeguarding in education;
- o children missing education;
- o electively home educated learners;
- o parent/carer liaison of permanently excluded pupils;
- o statutory legal functions of the Education Welfare Service via Lead Education Welfare Officer role;
- o support for Gypsy and Traveller children; and
- o children with English as an additional Language.

The EET provides support for Standard and Enhanced Referrals, the criteria are as follows:

### Standard Criteria

- o Deregistering from school and becoming or moving into the local authority as electively home educated learners
- o Becoming a looked after child within Bridgend
- o Becoming a child missing education within Bridgend or last known to Bridgend
- o Becoming a child who has English as an additional language within Bridgend

- o Entry by any other vulnerable group

#### Enhanced Criteria

- o Two or more vulnerable groups are identified by school or others as potentially impacting upon education or access to education.
- o Permanent exclusion
- o Child missing education – off roll over four weeks or not in full-time education
- o Electively home educated and not satisfied that legal threshold is being met
- o New refugee to the County of Bridgend.
- o Looked after child and issues identified within the educational provision

#### Examples of what the EET will not or cannot provide

- o provide direct education provision to children on or off school roll.
- o provide ad hoc or temporary cover for children pending them taking up suitable education
- o duplicate the work and role of other local authority teams responsible for additional learning needs or inclusion
- o The EET do not have authority to agree funding for ongoing or additional support for children deemed to be vulnerable
- o The EET will not attend all looked after children reviews but will prioritise attendance at reviews depending on the child's needs and current situation

# SECTION 7

## RECORD KEEPING

## Record Keeping

Foster carers play an important part in the process of gathering information about a child/ young person and can make unique contributions as a result of their written daily observations within the foster home. Separate records should be kept for each child/ young person in your care on Recording Sheets (these will be provided by your supervising social worker) and then stored in a lockable cabinet to ensure confidentiality. The foster carer has a responsibility to ensure this information is not shared inappropriately. When a placement ends the recordings will be collected and stored on the child's file.

Every foster carer will be issued with a diary, this will be for day – to day appointments, meetings etc.

### The daily case recording should include the following:

- Recordings should be factual and avoid opinion, the recording should detail what you have seen and heard.
- Any positive improvements, achievements and humorous things that happen which the child/ young person enjoyed.
- Where possible include names of people with whom they have spent their time.
- Dates when the child/ young person is away from the foster home, including dates when they are with family, friends, other foster carers, school activities, or they are missing.
- Comments the child/ young person makes that give you cause for concern. Wherever possible use the child/young person's own words.
- Details of a child/ young person's behaviour if it is causing you concern. The actual behaviour you observe and what was happening before it started. Children / young people who may have

been sexually abused may on occasion, display inappropriate sexual behaviour. Record your reactions. Over time you may build up a picture of what triggers behaviour and also what brings it to an end.

- Details of any specific incidents or events or changes of circumstances of any member of the family. It is also important to include details of any complaints or disagreements you have had with the child/ young person that may at some stage form the basis of a formal complaint against you.
- Details of any accidents or injuries, however slight. Describe what, when, and how they occurred. Name any witnesses and any action. Also record the time, date and the name of the social worker to whom the incident was reported.
- Record any medication administered, either prescribed or over the counter drugs the dosage, time, date and the name of the person who administered the medication. Include information on LAC medicals, dental, immunisations, length of illnesses and any record of treatment. Dates of any missed appointments should also be recorded and the reasons why. This will provide a medical record for the child / young person and can be referred to at any given time.
- Dates for reviews, meetings, family meetings concerning the child/ young person should also be recorded.
- Contact with the child / young person's school and educational progress.
- Details of any contact visits with the child/ young person's family or relatives and any significant interactions including telephone calls, letters, etc. Numbers of telephone contacts should be recorded. Records of any observations. For example the interaction

between the child/ young person and their parents. The reaction of the child/ young person after contact visits.

- Details of meetings and visits by social workers and other professionals and details of any contact with outside agencies.
- Details of any requests for help with any problems that you have made to your supervising social worker or with the child / young person's social worker. Include details of the worker's name, when the request was made, the response and when it was received.
- Details of times when alternative care-givers e.g baby sitters, childminders or another foster carer have cared for the child/ young person. A brief written record signed by the care giver could also be included.
- Any involvement with the police, noting date, police station and police officer involved and the nature of involvement.
- Dates of any theft or wilful damage caused by the child/ young person, this is particularly important as specific details will be required for insurance purposes, as well as to ensure health and safety of individuals.
- When a child/ young person has a specific problem such as an eating disorder the daily intake of food will need to be monitored and recorded.
- Don't forget to add children's milestones and achievements
- Make sure you date and sign every entry and number each page and underline each finished entry.

All this information on the child/ young person can form the basis of life journey work for them. This information can also be accessed for court purposes. Please be mindful of how you record information balancing the

negatives and the positives sensitively. Therefore unnecessary opinions / comments should be avoided to prevent undue distress to the child / young person. Remember the child/ young person is able to request access to their records.

### Access to Records

If a child wants to access their records they may submit a request via their social worker or alternately by completing a *Subject Access Request* form via the BCBC website, under the data protection section. Requests are usually fulfilled within 1 month. A link to the website is below:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/freedom-of-information/data-protection/>

# SECTION 8

**SAFER CARING**

## Safer Care

The first responsibility of a Bridgend foster carer is to ensure that children who are placed with you are safe and well cared for. We work in partnership with parents and foster carers to help us fulfil this responsibility.

I'm sure you will remember from your preparation training how safe caring is particularly significant for foster carers in that their normal patterns of behaviour and domestic routines can be misconstrued by a child / young person.

Think about the rules you considered as part of your preparation training and whether they need re-considering in light of the individual's child's / young person's needs. Some examples are as follows:

- Who will bath the child / children, how will you manage this?
- Who can be left alone with whom?
- What is appropriate dress / undress in a household which includes non-family members?
- How will you manage bedtime routines, for example stories at bedtime. It is suggested that this is done downstairs in the living room on the settee with the child sitting next to you and not on your lap.



- Nightmares during the night who will attend to the child if you are a couple; How will you manage this as a single carer?
- How will you manage conflict and differences between the foster child/ young person and your own children? Do you use the same form of discipline?

These are just a few scenarios to think about as a family and the need to look at making a family policy that will ensure the safety and wellbeing of your foster family and the foster child.

Family policies help to set up boundaries and promote safe caring. A family policy should be done as soon as possible as part of your assessment. If this has not happened your Supervising Social Worker will discuss this with you at the beginning of your fostering career so the boundaries are set from the beginning. This will also help minimise the risk of allegations.

There is a suggested format to use at the back of this handbook.

Please remember it is important to review your family policy on a regular basis, so that it meets the needs of each child you care for.

We realise the above may sound very worrying, but it is important that everyone involved in fostering needs to understand that their first responsibility must be to protect the children we look after as well as your own family.

Please consult your supervising social worker for advice, information and support.

## KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE AROUND DOGS

- Teach the children in your care how to be appropriate with pet dogs e.g. to be calm and careful around dogs to ensure they stay safe!
- Children should never go near dogs they don't know and only pat or play with a dog if the owners permission has been given
- Don't let children tease any dog or play too roughly with them
- Teach your dog **not** to jump up or be too boisterous
- Tell the Children in your care never to go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, ill or injured as dogs may react badly
- **Never** leave young children unsupervised with any dog, even if it's only for a few minutes
- Make sure you socialise any puppy properly with children and teach them how to behave. Doing this should ensure you raise a friendly adult dog that is safe to have around children

**To teach your children more about  
dogs, visit [www.learnwithdogs.co.uk](http://www.learnwithdogs.co.uk)**

The questionnaire over the page is used in the fostering assessment process, and can provide a child with information about the pet that they may be sharing a house with.

The following breeds of dogs are prohibited as pets by The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991:

- Pit Bull Terrier
- Dogo Argentine
- Fila Brazilliero
- Japanese Towser

Special caution should also be observed when assessing households containing the following:

- Alsatian (German Shepherd)
- Rottweiler
- Doberman
- Bull dog
- or a 'pack' of dogs (more than two dogs)

Although these breeds are not listed as dangerous in the legislation, they are known to be aggressive and potentially aggressive, having been bred as guard dogs. Such dogs can become volatile when confronted with more difficult behaviour.

It is acknowledged that all dogs have the potential to be dangerous and that children can provoke attacks, so careful matching would need to take place in any home where there are pets. Even the most docile of dogs may resent successive children coming into the home demanding the attention they once had. Carers must supervise the dogs and children at all times to ensure the safety of the child.

If an applicant to foster owns any of the above dangerous dogs, they are unable to be assessed as Foster Carers. If an approved Foster Carer acquires a prohibited dog, their approval would need to be terminated if they were not prepared to cease ownership. Similarly, if an approved foster carer acquires a dog they will need to advise their supervising Social Worker in order that an assessment can be undertaken.



# SECTION 9

**MEDICAL CARE**

**STANDARD HYGIENE**

## Medical Care

Foster carers with the day to day care, or respite care of a child young person have a clear role in promoting their health and to ensure they receive all necessary medical and dental care. This is in consultation with social workers and parents.

Wherever possible we recommend children / young people remain with their own family GP. If this is not possible we would expect a foster carer to register any new foster child / young person with your own GP within 72 hours of the placement. The child / young person must also be registered with a dentist, and an optician to ensure regular check-ups. A child's medical records will be transferred from the previous GP / dentist.

If a child/ young person is already receiving treatment from a GP or clinic, it may be more appropriate for the child to remain with the same service. It is assumed that you will take the child for future appointments, possibly with the parents if appropriate. This will be discussed with the child's social worker.

It is important that you are made aware of any treatment the child is currently in receipt of, including a psychologist or specialist. You may be asked to support the child to attend these appointments, it is important therefore that these services have your contact information.

Children and young people who have disabilities may require additional support and equipment. It is important that you raise with both the child's social worker and your supervising social worker if you feel the child requires additional support to that being provided, including a reassessment or review of services and equipment in place. Please advise the supervising social worker if you are unsure how to maintain any equipment that is in place for a child/ young person in relation to their health needs and we will ensure that you are given appropriate advice and guidance.

Children / young people must be offered a statutory medical examination. The Looked After Children's health nurse will make contact with you to arrange this.

Medical records are often incomplete for foster children. It is important for the child to have as full medical information as possible as part of his / her natural need for information. Health history as well as life events are important in gaining an identity and sense of self. Please ensure you keep a record of all medical treatment a child / young person receives whilst in your care.

It is important that you encourage a child/ young person in your care to be healthy and active and that the care you provide is adjusted to the child's needs and level of development. It is important that you ensure you attend training in relation to child development to assist you with this.

### **Blood Borne Viruses**

The following advice for foster carers is to reduce the risk of blood borne virus transmissions. These are common sense precautions that will protect against blood borne viruses and other infections which may be transmitted via blood and body fluids. They should be incorporated as standard practice in all settings at all times.

#### Standard infection control precautions

1. Always keep cuts or broken skin covered with a waterproof dressing
2. Avoid direct skin contact with blood or body fluids
3. If blood is splashed onto the skin it should be washed off immediately with soap and water. Splashes of blood in the eyes or mouth should be washed immediately with plenty of water
4. If a sharps injury is sustained or blood is splashed into the eyes or mouth, or on to non-intact skin (e.g. eczema) medical advice should be sought promptly
5. Wear disposable gloves when contact with blood or body fluids is likely

6. Always wash hands after removing gloves
7. Always wash hands before and after giving first aid
8. Never share toothbrushes and razors as they may be contaminated with blood
9. Teach children to avoid contact with other people's blood as soon as they are able to understand
10. Teach children to wash their hands before meals and after using the toilet

## Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus which causes infection that may damage the liver. People with Hepatitis B do not necessarily have symptoms or feel unwell but some do get a short flu like illness, often with jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes and dark urine), nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite. Very rarely Hepatitis B infection may cause acute liver failure. Most adults infected with the virus recover fully and develop lifelong immunity. However a small proportion, about 1 in 10, may remain infected (Hepatitis B carriers). Hepatitis B carriers are infectious to other people. The UK has a relatively low prevalence of Hepatitis B. It is estimated that about 0.3% of the general population are Hepatitis B carriers.

Hepatitis B is spread by direct contact with an infected person's blood or certain body fluids:

- From an infected mother to her baby at birth or by breast feeding
- By sexual intercourse with an infected person without a condom
- By sharing contaminated needles or other equipment for drug injecting
- By tattooing, ear piercing and body piercing or acupuncture with unsterilised needles or equipment
- Through a blood transfusion in a country where blood donations are not screened for Hepatitis B (all blood for transfusion in the UK is screened)
- By sharing razors and toothbrushes which may be contaminated with blood from an infected person



Hepatitis B is not spread by normal daily contact and activities such as coughing, sneezing, kissing, hugging, holding hands, sharing bathrooms and toilets or food cutlery and crockery.

### Immunisation against Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B infection can be prevented by immunisation. Some children being placed with foster carers may be chronic carriers of the infection as a result of acquiring the infection from their infected mother, their parents' lifestyle, or sexual abuse by infected parents or others. The Local Authority suggests that immunisation is offered to foster carers because the Hepatitis B status of the children being placed is usually not known. If you would like to be immunised against Hepatitis B please contact your GP.

The Local Authority will assist foster carers in obtaining immunisation against Hepatitis B.

### Vaccines

The currently available vaccines are very effective with around 9 out of 10 people responding fully to a course of vaccine. Hepatitis B is an inactivated vaccine and is not derived from human blood. The standard schedule is one injection followed by another a month later and the third 6 months after the initial dose.

### Dealing with accidents and spillage

If an accident happens and involves hospital treatment, please contact the child / young person's social worker immediately. If the child / young person needs an anaesthetic, it is essential that you contact the social worker or team manager who will advise you on the signing of the medical consent form, since you must not sign unless authorised to do so. Out of office hours, you should ring the Emergency Duty team.

Foster carers have a responsibility to offer a safe environment and to be aware of safety issues. Although the needs and abilities of the children who are cared for by Bridgend foster carers vary enormously, we have a general checklist of what you must do to keep your home safe. Most

accidents are avoidable if we are safety conscious, so if you think about the following things, you will be aware of possible dangers in your home and can plan to prevent accidents.

- 1) Do windows and doors lock properly? Would a stair gate be needed? Are garden gates and fences secured?
- 2) Would you need a fireguard? If you have storage heaters, do they get hot to touch. Do you have any old electric sockets or trailing wires?
- 3) Are things like matches, alcohol, paint, household cleaners and medicines out of reach.
- 4) Do you have sharp things lying around such as razors, sharp knives, tools or sewing equipment?
- 5) Would you need to think about keeping ornaments and other valuables out of reach and perhaps not using tablecloths?
- 6) In your garden, do you have any materials lying around that could be dangerous? If you have a pond then that would have to be fenced off or securely covered.
- 7) Common sense must be used by carers in considering situations such as weather and wellbeing for instance is a coat or sunblock required. It is the role of the carer to meet the child's needs as they would their own children and to pre-empt any risks and dangers that the child/young person may be exposed to. If a carer is experiencing difficulty in managing the child's behaviour and or supporting the child's wellbeing these concerns should be discussed and addressed with the supervising social worker at the earliest convenience.

Please also see the Health and Safety checklist which is part of the Form F assessment and your annual review procedure. This will also be reviewed every year as part of your Annual Review and updated if anything changes in the interim.

Please ensure you record information regarding any accidents on the Recording sheets and inform the child/young person's social worker and supervising social worker.

# SECTION 10

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

## Challenging behaviour

Being a foster carer is a complex task and is often demanding. The children and young people looked after by you have often been through difficult, sometimes traumatic, background experiences and some of them can present some very difficult and challenging behaviour. Carers can often feel bewildered by the behaviour of foster children, finding it difficult to understand and feeling sometimes that nothing that you do seems to make a difference.

It is important that, as part of a broader understanding of behaviour, you have an understanding about the way children grow and develop. As children move through different stages in their lives they are learning more and more about the world around them and their understanding grows. It is crucial that the responses of carers takes into account a child's age and understanding and places any particular behaviour in the context of the child's stage of development. A table of child development is included at the back of this handbook which you may find useful.

Difficult behaviour is often a way of communicating difficult feelings. Knowing this can help you to understand the reasons for the behaviour and influence the way that you manage it. Having an understanding of a

child's previous experiences can help you to predict the kind of behaviour that you may expect and spot the triggers that seem to set off a particular piece of behaviour.

Working in partnership with the child's parents, social worker, and other relevant parties, can help this understanding and ensure that there is consistency in the responses that the child gets when displaying certain behaviours. The guidance provided here includes some general advice about managing behaviour. It is vitally important that a discussion takes place as part of any placement agreement about the specific issues relating to a particular child. This should involve identifying any particular behavioural problems and considering strategies for responding to them.

### Encouraging Good Behaviour

Rewarding good behaviour remains one of the key ways to help children change the way they behave. It is not a short term strategy and won't be instantly effective, it requires consistency and persistence however it has recognised success. This does not have to always be a physical reward, positive praise or a "high five" can be hugely rewarding for children.

### Paying attention

We often give attention to children when they are behaving in an unacceptable way. This is very confusing for children as we are rewarding their negative behaviour. Using positive praise to reward good behaviour and ignoring low level negative behaviour. Instant rewards are vital when promoting positive behaviour, these can be lengthened as the acceptable behaviour increases. (Following a week of good behaviour, allowing the child to choose a special activity on Friday evening)

### Explaining

Sometimes children simply do not know that a type of behaviour is unacceptable to you as it was not unacceptable in their own home. We do not want them to feel bad or wrong about such things, gently pointing out to them clearly and calmly, when they are on their own, what is unacceptable and why is a sensitive approach. It can be useful to develop some house rules, things that you expect or don't expect to happen in your home, so that a child or young person can be clear about what is

required of them. These might include things like swearing, bedtimes, personal care, and times for coming in. Some of these rules might be negotiable, particularly with older children, but be clear about what is not negotiable. Children can only behave within boundaries if they are clear about what they are. Be consistent. The child needs to know where they stand. 'Family meetings' can help where specific issues need to be resolved

### Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

However much you might understand and, sometimes, even sympathise with, a child when they are behaving in a way that is unacceptable, you still have to manage the behaviour. If certain behaviour is clearly related to a child's background experiences it may take time for them to fully recover from the experiences. In the meantime they have to be able to control their behaviour or develop new strategies for dealing with certain feelings. You need to help develop those strategies. If you are asking a child to stop behaving a particular way, such as swearing when they are angry, give them an alternative they can do when they feel this way. (Write a letter about how they feel and throw it away or rip it up and put it in the bin)

Prioritise the issues that you need to deal with. If you try to tackle a whole range of difficult behaviours at once you will find yourself constantly doing battle and feeling like you are just saying 'No' all the time. Decide on the most important issues to deal with. Lesser issues might wait until a later stage. Don't dwell on bad behaviour. Deal with it and move on.

### **What you should never do when managing behaviour:**

- Use any form of corporal punishment on a child. This includes smacking, slapping, shaking, using an implement or any form of rough handling
- Deprive them of food, drink and warmth
- Deprive them of sleep
- Withhold medication or any treatment
- Humiliate them in any way
- Use disrespectful or abusive language
- Restriction or refusal of communication or visits with family members or their social worker.

- Fine them i.e. the permanent withholding of money as a punishment

### What is a deprivation of liberty? DOLS

'Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be deprived of his liberty save in the following cases and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law.' (Article 5 ECHR: Right to liberty and security). A Local Authority, as a public body, is required by section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 not to act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right. (Emma Sutton QC)

Creating a situation for a child where there are restrictions, confinement, continuous supervision and control may amount to a deprivation of liberty. The deprivation of a person's liberty should not happen unless it is completely necessary and deemed to be in the best interests of the person concerned.

Situations of this kind require legal authorisation in order to be deemed lawful. Even situations designed (with the best of intentions) to keep a child or young person "safe" may need to be formally and legally authorised to avoid an unlawful deprivation of a child's liberty and a breach of their Human Rights.

Don't forget that you are not on your own in this, though it may feel that way sometimes. Seek the help and support through your supervising social worker or the child's social worker.

### Ignoring

Behaviour that is designed to get attention can often be dealt with most effectively by not giving it any. If a child learns that it is positive behaviour not negative behaviour that draws attention they may change their tactics to get the attention they want. However, if the behaviour is either in a public place or the child may be placing themselves or others at risk then this may not be an appropriate method of dealing with it.

### Redirecting

Getting a child interested in something else can sometimes help to delay any problems or difficulties, particularly if you are in a public place

### Telling Off

Stating your disapproval immediately the behaviour occurs can be a very effective tool. Being mindful of the tone of voice that is used is extremely important as shouting can often exacerbate situations, having the opposite effect to the one you want.

Also children who have a very low self-esteem can easily feel humiliated by shouting. Some carers have found it useful to actually lower their voice, to calm things down. A frown can indicate disapproval just as well without the child feeling the pressure of being told off.

### Time Out

Time to calm down can take the edge out of difficult situations and allow the opportunity to have a discussion at a later stage. 'Time Out' can allow both you and the child the chance to calm down. Walk away if the situation is getting too heated and explain why you are doing so. Count to ten – or probably twenty – or maybe a hundred! Resolutions of problems happen much easier when everyone is calm. Remember that, especially in the early days of placement a child might actually be quite anxious so sending them to their room on their own might not be appropriate. It might have other connotations too for children who have been sexually abused. Time out can involve just sitting quietly for a period. "Time in" can be more effective than "time out" in many situations especially with children who have experienced trauma. This involves staying close to the child when they are upset, angry or they have done something they shouldn't have. This gives a message to the child that their carer will always be there for them no matter the circumstances. When the child is ready, it is useful to talk through things with the child to help them understand their feelings and emotions.

### Changing the Environment

Moving a child to another room or turning off any external noise, like the TV or radio can help to take the heat out of a situation and, simply, quiet things down.

### Withholding Activities

Temporary withholding of an activity, which a young person enjoys can be an effective sanction, such as not being allowed to watch a favourite TV programme or play computer games or go swimming.



### Temporarily Withholding Pocket Money

If a child intentionally breaks or damages something it might be appropriate to use some of their pocket money to contribute towards the cost of replacement, as a means of helping them to learn the consequences of their actions. Deducting a bit of pocket money over a period of time is often better than taking the whole amount in one go. The child will just feel resentful and the punishment may therefore be counter-productive. If you stop pocket money in response to a particular behaviour this should only be for a limited period and the money should be put to one side or into their savings account. Children should not be fined, in that money is permanently withheld from them.

### Confiscation

The permanent removal of a child's property should only be used if the items are considered dangerous, illegal or unacceptable, for example alcohol or weapons. You should let the social worker know if you do this and they will advise you what to do with the items.

### Recording

Keeping a record of difficult behaviour can be useful as it may help you to identify a pattern or a trigger. Recording periods of good behaviour can do the same thing

### Restraint

Foster carers have a responsibility to protect the children and young people in their care and to keep them safe. It is common sense that certain situations might occur which require the foster carer to take some form of physical action and restrain a child, if, for example, a child is about to run into the road or fall and cause themselves an injury. It is important however that restraint is used only when absolutely necessary and only as an absolute last resort. Only if a child seems likely to cause immediate injury to themselves or others should physical restraint be considered and then only using the minimum amount of force for the shortest possible time.

Physical restraint should **NEVER** be used as a threat or a disciplinary sanction, never used in anger and rarely used as a means of depriving a child or young person of their liberty. If, for example, a child or young person tries to leave your home at an inappropriate time, express your concerns and the risks to them. For a young child minimal restraint may be appropriate, in a gentle and encouraging manner. For an older child or young person any form of restraint is likely to escalate the problem. If they ignore your advice and leave, thereby putting them at risk, you need to inform the police and the emergency duty team.

If any form of restraint is ever used, the foster carer should make a meticulous recording of what led to the situation and the outcome and should, at the earliest opportunity inform the child's social worker, their manager or the duty social worker as well as their supervising social worker or fostering duty worker. Alert the emergency duty team if out of working hours.

### Absence

When a child is placed with you, the child's social worker should make you aware of the child's history and any episodes where a child has gone missing or if this is something they have good reason to think they will do.

As part of the Placement and Safe Care Agreement it should take into account any episodes that the child has gone missing and identify places that the child is likely to abscond to. Within the agreement there should be a clear plan for the processes you should follow when identifying that a child has gone missing and the procedures you should take.

If a child in your care has previously gone missing or has a history of not returning home, you can talk to the child/young person about the risks that this presents and help them to understand what they should do to keep themselves safe. This could include ringing you or contacting appropriate adults to inform them that they are safe.

Children and young people can go missing for several reasons and it is important that you are able to develop a relationship with them to identify any triggers and try and keep them safe. Many of our children and young people are not used to care givers worrying about their

whereabouts and it is important you communicate your concerns and worries about keeping them safe.

There are different processes that you must follow when a child/young person goes missing determined by the following situations:

If a child/young person has gone out with friends and has not returned by the expected time, you should try and contact them by text or try ringing their phone. If the child/young person does not respond continue to send a text/ring to advise them you are worried about them and ask them to send you a text indicating they are ok.

If they have not returned/responded within an hour consider going out to the places that they may be and ring their peers/peers parents etc.

At this stage you should also ring the emergency out of hours team if after 5pm on week days and report the child missing. Within normal working hours (week days) 8.30am-5pm you should notify the child's social worker and/or your supervising social worker. There is no need to contact the police at this stage and EDT/social worker will provide you with advice.

If you have any concerns about the child's presentation prior to them going missing, for example, low mood, behaving out of character, substance misuse then you should contact the police and share your concerns and report them missing. If you are unable to locate or have contact with the child/young person after exhausting all searches/contacts then notify the police that the child/young person is missing.

It is helpful if you can provide the police with as much information about the child/young person as possible.

- Description of the child
- What they are wearing
- Places where they may be
- Known risks, e.g, family members, substance misuse, state of mind

The police will provide you with a crime reference number and you will need to report this to EDT if out of hours.

This can be a very worrying time as a foster carer and it is important that you try and remain calm and record appropriate information in your recording sheets. Information should include what time they went missing, what you have done to try and locate the child and who you have contacted. You should also record what time they returned and whereabouts if known.

When the child returns it is important to notify all workers who have been involved, e.g. the police, EDT, social workers from fostering and safeguarding as appropriate.

The police should keep you notified and will often visit you at home to look in the child/young person's room for any clues to where they may be. Many children/young people who have a history of going missing will be aware that you have contacted the police and may be fearful to return home. Keep lines of communication open with the child and advise them that you are worried about them and they will not be in trouble. Discussions about your concerns can be discussed with the child when appropriate.

Any concerns that arise should be reported to the child's social worker and your supervising social worker.

The local authority have to record all incidents of children who are looked after who are missing. It is very important that this is monitored and that the child is referred to appropriate support to manage the risks. This may include direct work from services such as Barnardo's, Taith, YOS among others. In cases where children are frequently missing, the local authority has a statutory process in place whereby multiagency meetings, known as Misper Strat's are held to manage the risks presented.

## **Stages of Child Development**

0 – 1	<p>The primary task for the child at this stage is to develop <b>TRUST</b>. The child is likely to be distinguishing the important carers in their life and starting to be cautious of strangers. They need to learn that their environment is trustworthy so sudden noises or reactions can make them anxious.</p>
1 - 3	<p>The primary task for the child at this stage is to develop <b>AUTONOMY</b>.</p> <p>They want to explore the world and this can mean that they are forever touching things that they shouldn't touch or heading for places that they shouldn't be. Prevention is an important aspect of care at this age, by keeping inappropriate things out of reach and employing safety measures.</p> <p>As they become more aware of themselves, the word's "me! me!" and "No! No!" are common and can be very irritating especially when accompanied by a tantrum. It is important that things are not made into a control issue with toddlers. Helping a child <i>learn</i> to cooperate is a better option. Distraction is also a good tactic as is providing alternative behaviours. They love to mimic you so the way you do things is important. Toddlers have a short attention span so don't expect them to be able to concentrate on one thing for a long period of time.</p>
4 - 5	<p>The primary task for a child at this stage is to develop <b>INITIATIVE</b>.</p> <p>They begin to develop a willingness to try things and the confidence to take risks. They enjoy play and their imagination is really beginning to develop. Their independence is developing further. Their favourite questions are "How?" and "Why?" Youngsters who have had an unsettled early life may repeat these questions interminably as they try to make some sense of their world. They are not trying to irritate, just to understand. It is now easier to explain to children why they can and can't do</p>

	certain things and bargaining becomes a possibility. "I'll do this if you do that"
6 -10	<p>The primary task for the child at this stage is <b>INDUSTRY</b>.</p> <p>Feeling successful encourages their sense of self-worth and they really respond to praise and develop an eagerness to learn more.</p> <p>Their attention span grows so it is possible to distract them for longer. Explanations can be used, though the notion of 'fairness' becomes an issue for them and you will hear "it's not fair" frequently.</p>
11-18	<p>The primary task for the young person at this stage is to develop their sense of <b>IDENTITY</b>. They are finding their place in the world and will feel that they can now make their own decisions. They need advice and guidance but they also need to be heard and to feel involved in the decisions that are made about them and for them. Though there has to be some absolutes in terms of the expectations about their behaviour, some flexibility to allow for negotiation and compromise can help them to feel that they are having their say. Choose your battles and let some go.</p> <p>Affirm their uniqueness and they will develop self-worth</p>

# SECTION 11

# LIFE JOURNEY WORK

## Life journey work

Children / Young people who live with their birth families have the opportunity to know about their past and clarify past events in terms of

the present. Children separated from their birth families are often denied this opportunity. Their past may be lost or much of it forgotten.

When children / young people lose track of their past, they may find it difficult to develop emotionally and socially. If adults cannot or do not discuss this past with them, it is then reasonable for the child/ young person to assume it may be all negative.

It is therefore very important for foster carers to help children young people hold on to their past and to help them make sense of it. When a child/ young person move on from you or from other placements there is a real danger that they will lose part of their life. Children young people in the care system can move several times and they have nothing to show for it. Please be mindful of this and start to collate information, memorabilia, photographs, record of achievements etc. with the child as soon as they are placed with you.

This information can form aspects of life work with the child/ young person. The foster carer has an important role to play in this as they are the main carer for the child and can ensure they make very effort to keep evidence of the time spent with them. Here are some ideas:

Photographs/ videos of the time spent with you and your family, these could be put into a photograph album with appropriate captions to highlight the event or experience.

Records of achievements / school reports / drawings, objects made by the child.

Significant events such as football tickets, party invitations, leaflets etc.

All this information could be collated in a memory box or a folder. **Please be mindful of not using scrap books.**

The child / young person's social worker will have different sources of information to inform the child / young person about their past. This work will need to be done jointly with the social worker and the child. This is a very important piece of direct work for the child/ young person in helping them form their own sense of identity and belonging.



This life work should grow with the child/ young person and it is important to acknowledge it is their own personal possession, however please be mindful that there maybe occasions when a child / young person may become angry and will attempt to destroy this work, due to working through painful experiences. It is suggested that copies are kept of information, letters or pictures as much as possible. It may be in the best interest of the child/ young person for the foster carer to take responsibility for its safe keeping, this should be discussed with the child and their social worker.

If you have any concerns / issues or need help and support in starting life work with children / young people, please discuss this with your supervising social worker / social worker.

# SECTION 12

## PLACEMENT ENDINGS

### Placement endings

Foster carers are expected to purchase appropriate luggage for any child/ young person moving on from placement. We suggest you build a stock pile of holdalls / large bags which can be purchased at a reasonable price in local markets. This purchase should come out of the foster carers allowance. This will avoid any sudden unplanned moves where the foster

carer is not able to provide the child / young person with appropriate luggage to pack his / her belongings.

**There is no acceptable reason why any foster carer should pack a child/ young person's belongings in black rubbish bags!**

It is very important that there are clear arrangements in place for the transfer of belongings for a child. Life Journey Books, Passports and Savings must be clearly accounted for and it is advisable to make a note of what has been given, to who and when. You should not retain the personal items, savings or records of children who have left placement for extended periods of time, though there may be times where transitions can take longer than expected. Agreements should be reached with the social worker and new placement as to how the transfer of items will be managed and in what timescale. Your supervising social worker will support you with this.

Personal belongings of children and young people

When children / young people are placed with you it is important at this stage to make a list of the child's belongings; this will determine whether an initial clothing allowance will be needed.

Please note a child / young person may bring certain items from home that may be personal to them and where possible please ensure you respect this and ensure they are kept in a safe place, for example a favourite toy, or an item of clothing. This may have significance for the child and a link to their family, it is important to ensure that the child has something that smells of home, so please be mindful and where possible have discussion with the social worker before washing certain items, such as a security blanket.

It would be expected that if a child / young person has come from a previous placement then they will have sufficient clothing, personal items, toys, etc. belonging to them, this should include life work and photographs of the time spent with the previous carer and any savings book for the child. If this is not the case then the supervising social worker will raise this with the previous foster carer.

At the placement meeting it will be decided if there are any extra expenditure items needed for the child or young person with all parties concerned.

During the duration of the placement any extra expenditure requests outside of the fostering allowance will be discussed with the child's social worker in conjunction with your supervising social worker and finally agreed by the fostering manager. Each case will be on its own merit.

When the child / young person moves on from the placement it is important at this stage to also make a list of items belonging to the child/ young person to ensure there are no discrepancies at a later stage. You can share the task of helping the child/ or young person pack and make a list with them if age appropriate.

Please be mindful of not emptying a young person's room and packing their belongings without prior consultation with the young person, social worker and supervising social worker. Please ensure due consideration is given to packing a child's / young person's belongings neatly and with care.

### Placement Moves

Children can move from placements for several reasons, some examples are:

- Returning to live with parents
- Placement with birth family
- Moving on for adoption
- Moving to independent living
- Moving from a long term to a short term placement
- Moving to and from a residential placement
- Placement breakdown

Wherever possible, foster carers should support children and young people with their transitions. This may involve taking the children for

extended visits, telephone contact and support to the new placement, the parent/ family member or new carer coming to the existing placement for advice and guidance.

When children move on for adoption, their transition plans are managed via the adoption service. The duration, frequency and length of the plan is determined by the individual child's needs, balanced with any potential risks. The foster carers will be actively involved, with the support of their supervising social worker, in the planning meetings and preparation for an adoptive move.

It is very important that supervision is attended regularly and that any issues are discussed proactively. This will enable the team to support you appropriately and prevent placement breakdowns. If there are issues within the placement that you feel may impact on the stability of the placement, a Placement Support Meeting needs to take place. In a placement support meeting, a senior social worker from the fostering team will attend the placement alongside your supervisor and the placement support worker to discuss the issues and put a plan of support in place. Where possible the child's social worker will also attend.

The placement support worker is a member of the fostering team who is able to provide additional support to you outside of supervisions. The placement support worker can:

- Undertake additional visits
- Provide additional telephone support
- Give advice and emotional support
- Deliver one to one training on behaviour management techniques
- Support a foster carer's children where placements are impacting upon them

If there are issues within a placement where a foster carer no longer feels able to continue providing support to a child or young person, a Placement Stability Meeting needs to be arranged. The Placement Stability Meeting will include the same people as described above, the issues impacting on the placement will be explored and the supports reviewed. However if the foster carer feels unable to continue with the

placement, it is during this meeting that 28 days notice can be given for a foster placement. The fostering team are unable to accept notice outside of a Placement Stability Meeting.

### Good Good Byes

Every child/ young person should be given the opportunity to say goodbye whatever the circumstances. As a foster carer you will be encouraged to provide opportunities for the child/ young person to say goodbye to the people and friends who are important to them whilst they have been living with you.

For example you could arrange a party if appropriate or give a small gift of remembrance. Every child/ young person should leave a placement however short a time spent with you, with at least a photograph of themselves with you and your family. This is part of the life journey work that is necessary for foster carers to undertake with children and young people.

# SECTION 13

**WORKING WITH 16+ TEAM**

### Working with 16+Team

Children who are or have been looked after over a specified period of time are entitled to support from the local authority after they have turned 18. When children are nearing the age of 16 their social worker will change from Safeguarding to the 16+ Team.

Within 16+ Team, the young person will receive support from an allocated social worker until the age of 18, but will also receive support from a Personal Advisor who will provide support to them both before and after they turn 18.

The 16+ Team monitors a young person's progress toward independence via a Pathway Plan which is developed in partnership with the young person and is subject to regular reviews.

It is important that all foster carers support the children and young people in their care to develop their independence skills. As a child grows older and develops, their carer should be gradually doing less for the young person and doing more with them. For example, supporting the young person to make their own appointment with the GP, to wash their own clothes and prepare simple meals rather than doing this for them. Asking a young person the questions over the page will help to give you



an idea of what skills they need to develop in order to improve their independence.

The foster carer will be expected to take responsibility for keeping up with the resources and options available to the 16+ Team so to advise the young person appropriately and to work in partnership with the 16+ Team. If you are not clear and or confident about discussing these issues your supervising social worker and the 16+ team will be able to support you.

In order to promote a child/ young persons independence they need to understand how much necessities cost. Taking the child/ young person with you when you complete your regular shop will help to demonstrate this. Modelling to the child good money management and awareness of managing a budget will assist the child to learn these skills before allowing them to undertake the task themselves. It is important that young people are given financial responsibility in a gradual way by allowing the young person to undertake tasks such as:

- shopping for clothes within a budget
- learning a recipe, buying the ingredients within a budget and preparing a meal
- using a pay as you go mobile phone (please discuss with the social worker before hand)
- being encouraged to budget amounts of their pocket money to save towards a purchase
- shopping for personal care items within a budget (deodorant, shower gel)

## **PRACTICAL LIVING SKILLS**

Are you able to use a computer?

Do you have basic literacy skills i.e. able to read and understand information/write letters/email?

Do you know how to use the internet safely and any mobile APPS?

Do you know how to set up secure passwords for online accounts and keep passwords safe?

Do you know how to apply for identification documents?

Do you know what a National insurance (NI) number is and what it is for? Do you know how to keep your number safe.

Do you have an up to date passport or another form of personal identification.?

Can you arrange and attend appointments with you GP, dentist, optician and other professionals without support?

Do you know where the nearest hospital is and would you be able to access A&E if there was an emergency?

Can you maintain a relatively healthy diet?

Do you enjoy or take part in any exercise?

Can you shop for clothing appropriately (not spend all your money in one go on clothes!)?

Can you plan, shop for and prepare meals?

Can you do your own laundry? This includes ironing and putting your clothes away!

Can you undertake basic household tasks and keep your home clean and tidy?

Are you aware of basic first aid and health and safety in the home?

Are you able to appropriately manage your personal hygiene?

Do you have good timekeeping skills e.g. getting up in the morning with nobody to wake you, getting to appointments on time etc.?

Do you feel confident to make phone calls to professionals such as your social worker or PA, the GP, job centre, DWP etc.?

Are you able to use public transport? You need to know the prices, times, stations and stops.

Do you know what community resources are in your area such as library, community centre, swimming pool etc.?

Would you be able to access rights/representation services such as Citizens Advice Bureau or advocacy if needed?

Do you know how to access public services such as PayPoint and the post office?

Do you know where the council offices, jobcentre and Careers Wales offices are located?

## **MONEY MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

**Do you know how to open a bank account and what information Banks/ building societies will require?**

**Do you know what online banking is and how to access this. Do you know how to keep any passwords/ memorable information?**

**Do you understand what a direct debit and standing order are?**

Do you understand the fees for managing a bank account such as being overdrawn and bank charges such as returned direct debit?

Do you know the difference between a cash card, debit card and credit card?

Do you know what financial support and incentives there are for young people in education and training?

Do you know how to apply for Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), - (for young people aged 16-18 at the start of the academic year and in post 16 education.). Do you know how much payments are, how those payments are made and the criteria for receiving payments?

Do you know how to apply for an Assembly Learning Grant (ALG) – for those aged 19 years during the academic year. What payments are made and how payments are made?

Do you know how to access training schemes and financial incentives they offer?

Do you know how to use ATM or access cash back?

Do you understand how credit cards or store cards work?

Are you aware of 'credit rating' and the importance of having a good credit history?

Does the young person understand the importance of having a good credit history?

Do you know where to access support around debt issues?

Would you be able to contact a provider (e.g. gas or electric) to arrange a payment plan if you accrued debt or can't pay your bill in full?

Are you aware of different ways of borrowing money (e.g. friends/family, bank loans, fast loans, pawn shops)?

Would you be able to budget for your regular outcome and at the same time save to be prepared for any unexpected outgoings?

Do you understand the difference between really wanting something and actually needing it? Luxuries vs. necessities!

Do you understand the costs of having a mobile phone and internet access? Would you be able to search for the best/cheapest tariffs?

Do you know how to access financial advice/support or emergency financial assistance?

### When I Am Ready

'When I am Ready' is a scheme developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with local government and key third sector partners to

enable care leavers to continue to live with their former foster carers once they turn 18. Each local authority has developed their own arrangements for this provision.

These arrangements differ from foster care as once a young person has attained 18 years of age and is an adult they are no longer legally 'looked after' or 'in care'. The legislation and regulations that apply to fostering no longer apply and the legal basis on which a young person resides in the foster carers' home changes. The Local Authority would be facilitating a 'post-18 living arrangement' for that young person.

**A 'When I Am Ready' agreement may be made where:-**

The young person was a Looked After Child immediately prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and is living with foster carers in a placement arranged by the Local Authority (this includes in house, relative or Independent provider foster placements); and

The young person is deemed a category 1 young person under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014); and

The young person and the foster carers both wish to enter into a 'When I Am Ready' agreement and the arrangement has been set out in the young person's pathway plan; and

The Local Authority is satisfied that such an arrangement is consistent with the young person's wellbeing.

# SECTION 14

## LEGAL MATTERS

## Legal Matters

### Court proceedings

As a foster carer you will be formally notified by the legal department or the child/ren's social worker of any court proceedings which commence in respect of a child/ren placed with you. This notice does not mean you will be party to the proceedings.

## Acting as a Witness

As a foster carer on occasions you may be asked to make a statement and /or give evidence in court, in criminal or civil proceedings concerning children placed with you. The request may be made by the Local Authority, Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Children's Guardian, or the parents of the children. If anyone else other than the Local Authority asks you to give a statement, or to be a witness you should discuss this with your supervising social worker before agreeing. If necessary advice can be obtained from our legal department.

**It is particularly important to remember the issue of confidentiality and that no information concerning the children either written or verbal should be given to any other persons without the agreement of the department.**

As a foster carer you may need to give evidence in court and if this happens you are likely to be cross examined by lawyers for the other parties. This is not a regular occurrence and this may never happen in your fostering career so do not get alarmed, you will have support and advice on the process and your supervising social worker will be there to support you as well as the legal department.

## Recordings

The Local Authority has to disclose all relevant documentation in care proceedings, this may include written evidence from you when the court proceedings involve a children that are placed with you. Your supervising social worker will give you guidance in respect of completing entries in your daily logs. Recording Skills Training is provided by the Fostering Team and is mandatory. This information may all sound very daunting but please be re-assured you will receive every support and guidance in this process. **Please be mindful of ensuring that all recordings should be separate for each child in your care.**

## Care Order

When children are subject to Full Care Orders or Interim Care Orders, the local authority shares parental responsibility for them with their parents. Most “looked after children” are subject to Care Orders, some are placed under voluntary arrangements. A Care Order normally lasts until a child/young person is 18 years old, but an application can be made to the court to discharge it earlier.

Your placement agreement will include information as to the legal status of any child or children placed in your care. The Safeguarding Social Worker should advise you of any changes to this over the course of the placement.

## Voluntary Accommodation

Some children / young people are looked after and placed with foster carers by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with the parent/s, this is known as Section 76 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014). The local authority does not have parental responsibility for these children / young people, this remains solely with the parent/s.

## Child Arrangements Order

A local authority foster carer may apply with leave of the court for a Child Arrangements Order in respect of a child who has lived with them 1 year preceding the application without the consent of the local authority.

A foster carer can only apply for a Child Arrangements Order for a child who has been placed with them for 6 months if they have the consent of the local authority, the child is a relative, or the child has lived with the foster carer for at least a year before the application.

We would encourage partnership working at all times in the best interest of the children between foster carers and the local authority. A foster carer considering applying for any Order in respect of a child in the care of the local authority should discuss this with the children’s social worker and supervising social worker at an early stage.



A Child Arrangements Order confers parental responsibility which is shared with the parent/s this discharges any Care Order that is in force and can last until the child/ young person is 16 or up to 18 if specified by the courts. A person with a Child Arrangements Order can make day to day decisions about the child with the agreement of any others who have Parental Responsibility.

### Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

The aim of an SGO is to make secure the placement of children who are living with someone other than a parent/s on a long term basis and for whom adoption is not appropriate. It is intended to be more robust than a Child Arrangement Order in that parent/s cannot apply to revoke the order without the leave of the court to do so. A Special Guardianship Order lasts until the child / young person is 18, unless it is discharged. It revokes any existing orders. Under the SGO both the parent/s and the SG hold parental responsibility (PR) but the SG may exercise PR to the exclusion of anyone else.

A Foster carer may apply for a SGO in respect of the child in their care if the child has been living with them for at least 1 year before an application is made. Before making an application the foster carer must give the local authority at least 3 months notice of their intention to do so.

Approved Foster carers who are granted an SGO will receive an SGO allowance equal to level 1 fostering allowance minus child benefit and child tax credits which must be applied for. This allowance is protected for 2 years, after which financial support may still be given, however this is based on a means tested financial assessment. It is possible to have the means test during the assessment so that the potential Guardian is aware of the financial support they will receive after the protected period ceases.

Guardians are able to access support from the permanence team, who are part of Bridgend Foster Care. This can include but is not limited to, informal support via phone, attending support groups, home visits and

access to training provided to foster carers. Further information can be found via the website below:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/social-care-and-wellbeing/children-s-social-care/special-guardianship-orders/>

## Adoption

The local authority must consider a plan for providing permanence for any child who is looked after. This permanence plan is reviewed on a regular basis. In some cases where a child has been placed with a foster carer on a long term basis and it becomes clear that adoption would be the best way of achieving permanence for the child, the social worker may discuss the possibility of the foster carer adopting the child. If the foster carer, the child, and the local authority feel adoption would be appropriate then arrangements would be made for the relevant assessments of the foster carer as a prospective adopter to be undertaken. Following approval of the foster carer as an adopter and subsequent matching with the specific child at the Adoption Panel an application to court for an Adoption Order is made. When the Adoption Order is granted this discharges any Care Order as well as transferring all parental responsibility to the adoptive parent/s away from the birth parent/s.

## Official Visitors

As a result of court proceedings such people as the child/ren's Guardian, CAFCASS officer, an independent social worker, or specialists appointed by the court who may wish to see the foster child/ren in the foster home or elsewhere. They will have been directed by the court to undertake assessments to inform the court in its decision making process about the child/ren.

The foster carer should make the child's social worker aware of any request to see the child, if the social worker has not already been advised of the arrangements. The foster carer should also discuss any such request with their supervising social worker. The foster carer will be expected to cooperate with these official visitors but should always inform the child/ren's social worker before allowing any access to the child/ren.

## Press / Media

Foster carers are reminded that they should not discuss any child / young person in their care with the media or press. If a foster carer is contacted by a member of the press, they must get in touch with the child/ren's social worker / supervising social worker immediately. Please see Media Policy at back of handbook for more information.

# SECTION 15

## **ANNUAL REVIEW, TERMINATION AND APPEAL PROCESS**

## Annual Review, Termination of Approval and Appeal Process

Bridgend Foster Care team must review the approval of each foster carer on at least an annual basis, but may undertake a review when it is considered necessary.

The first review must be submitted to fostering panel and subsequently returned to panel at the discretion of the team. Annual Reviews that are not submitted to panel are signed off by the Fostering Team Manager. Where possible, Annual Reviews that are submitted to panel will be undertaken by a member of the team who is not your current Supervising Social Worker. Annual Reviews that are submitted to the Team Manager will be completed by your allocated Supervising Social Worker.

Within BCBC, annual reviews will be submitted to panel:

- every 3 years
- following a significant change of circumstances
- where changes of approval are required
- where there are concerns or complaints
- where there has been an allegation against the carer
- where there are child protection concerns

Annual Reviews require feedback from:

- Foster carers and their children if living in the home,
- Children placed (in accordance with their age and level of understanding),

- Supervising Social Worker – if not completing the review,
- Childrens Social Worker of all children placed that year,
- Professionals/ Agencies involved with the carer/ children e.g. school/ nursery/ Placement Support Worker/ Early Help – as appropriate,
- Childrens birth family as appropriate to be agreed with the childs social worker
- Pet/ Dog and Health and Safety Checklist (including gun safety as applicable) need to be completed for every review

There may be times that we need to have additional information in order to make a decision about suitability to foster or approval, but this will be discussed with you if and when it happens.

The social worker will review your current Foster Care Agreement as part of the process.

The social worker completing the review will complete a written report for panel with a recommendation regarding your continued suitability to foster and proposed approval terms. The report will be shared with you prior to panel and should be signed by you to confirm you have read the report. You may make representations to panel in writing/ in person or both about any of the information contained within the report and record any areas of disagreement.

The Enhanced DBS check and the Health checks should be undertaken every 3 years, and be requested 3 months prior to expiring to ensure that all foster carers have current checks in place. Health checks should be undertaken additionally within the 3 year period if there is a significant health issue in order to ensure that you continue to be of good health for the fostering task. Annual Reviews cannot be presented to panel without these checks being in place and may impact on placements.

Foster Carers are required to evidence that they have undertaken training every year in order for the fostering team to continue to recommend their approval as foster carers. During an annual review the social worker completing the review will need to see evidence that appropriate training has been undertaken and recorded within supervisions.

It is expected that the social worker completing the report, the supervising social worker for the foster carers and the foster carers themselves will attend foster panel for their review.

In the case of annual reviews for the team manager, there is no panel that takes place, the information is submitted in writing. However you may make written representations about any information contained within the review or may meet with either a senior practitioner or team manager to discuss any issues regarding the review.

Following Foster Panel, the Panel's recommendations are presented to the Agency Decision Maker, who, in Bridgend is the Head of Childrens Social Care. This may be undertaken by a nominated senior manager in the unlikely event of the Head of Childrens Social Care's absence. The usual timescale for this is 2 weeks.

If, in considering the recommendations the fostering team and the agency decision maker agree that the foster carer/s and/or their household are no longer suitable to foster, or that the terms of the approval need to be changed, they must -

- give written notice to you, together with the reasons and a copy of any recommendations made by Foster Panel.

and

- advise that you may, within 28days of the notice:
  - Submit in writing a request to appeal the decision to the Fostering Team Manager
  - Apply for the Independent Review of Determinations (IRM) to independently review the panel process leading to the fostering team proposing to terminate or change your terms of approval.

The IRM is not an appeal but the review panel recommendation must be taken into account by the fostering team and agency decision maker when a final decision is made.

You may be assisted in making a written representation by their legal advisor, advocate or friend.

Please note that option (b) ii is not available to foster carers who have been approved subject to section 7(11) of The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018. This is where a member of the fostering household has been convicted or cautioned for an offence specified within the legislation but has been approved as a carer for a specific child as their welfare requires it. Any such approval will be stated within your Foster Care Agreement and or placement documentation (Safe Care/ Placement Agreement).

If the fostering team does not receive any representations and no application has been made to the IRM within the 28 day period it may proceed to make its decision.

If the fostering team receives written representations it must refer the case to the fostering panel for its consideration. Taking the Panel's recommendation into account, the Agency Decision Maker will come to a conclusion as to whether or not to uphold the appeal.

If the carer wishes to take the matter further, reference must be made to the Authority's Complaints Procedure. A complaint will only be accepted regarding the process by which the decision was made, rather than the decision itself.

#### Procedure for Fostering Panel when reconsidering a re-referral:

Panel should be provided with the following documents prior to meeting:

- all papers relating to the applicant's appeal, i.e. those already presented to Panel
- minutes of the Panel meeting relating to the recommendation made in respect of the applicant.
- a copy of the letter sent to the applicant by the Agency Decision Maker setting out the reasons for the decision not to approve, or to de-register.
- a copy of the applicants' representation.
- any new information deemed relevant to the application.

#### Procedure for hearing representations during the Fostering Panel:

- the applicant will have an opportunity to make oral representations in respect of the information contained within the written representation.
- the Panel will, at the end of the oral representations, have an opportunity to ask any questions.
- the applicant will leave the Panel as will the author of the applicants' assessment
- the Panel will then consider the case
- the Panel Chair and advisor will give its recommendation and brief reasons for its decision.

### Resignation

A foster carer may give written notice to the fostering team at any time that they no longer wish to continue fostering. The foster carers approval is terminated 28days after the notice is received. The supervising social worker for the foster carer will produce a termination report for the fostering panel summarising the carer's time with the service, a copy of the report will be provided to the foster carer who may attend panel for the termination if they choose.

In the event that a foster carer wishes to resign and they have children in placement, we would ask that foster carers assist the local authority to move the child/ children from the placement in a planned way as much as the circumstances may allow. We would also want the opportunity to discuss the implications of the foster carers decision on the child with their social worker and discuss the situation with the child in accordance with their age and level of understanding. A placement support meeting may be utilised in order to effectively plan this process and ensure that the foster carer and the child/ children are appropriately supported through the process.

If you are considered no longer suitable for fostering, either through your Annual Review or because of an incident or complaint which causes concern, the matter will be referred to the Fostering Panel for their consideration. You will be invited to attend panel and will be provided copies of any assessments completed by the fostering team outlining the reasons for this. The final decision will be made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) taking into account any recommendations from panel.



There is a procedure should you not agree with the decision made, details of which are above.

### Confidentiality and Personal Belongings

It is important for all foster carers leaving the fostering service to ensure that any and all information relating to children who have been cared for is returned to the local authority to be filed or disposed of as appropriate. It is important that foster carers make arrangements with the fostering team for paperwork to be dropped off or collected where a decision has been made to terminate a carer's approval.

It is equally important to ensure that any personal belongings and/or savings of children who have been placed with foster carers are returned to the children. Arrangements need to be made with the children's social worker and/or the fostering team as appropriate to ensure that any items that have been left in the placement are transported to the children at the earliest opportunity.

# SECTION 16

## PARENT AND CHILD FOSTERING

## **Parent and Child Fostering**

Bridgend Fostering provides its own Parent and Child provision and its aim is to provide a foster placement to a parent and child where parenting skills can be assessed in a safe and nurturing environment.

Parent and child placements may be used:

- When a young person who is Looked After by the Local Authority and who is under the age of 18 has a baby;
- When a young person under the age of 18 who is not Looked After by the Local Authority has a baby and there are child protection concerns.
- Where an adult age 18 or older, has a baby and there are child protection concerns.

Parent and child foster carers are skilled in promoting positive attachments between the parent and baby and work with the parents

and other agencies to promote positive lifestyle choices, budgeting and independence skills.

Foster carers have their own supervising social worker and receive regular review meetings, usually held at their home.

The foster carers are responsible for recording detailed information around the parents' skills and the support required to provide "good enough" parenting. The recordings are used to form part of the parent's assessment and can be used in court if the baby is under the PLO process.

# SECTION 17

## **TRANSITIONAL FOSTER CARERS**

### **Transitional Foster Carers**

Transitional Foster carers have been formed as part of the Remodelling Children's Services Programme

The Transitional Carers provide a step-down for young people coming out of residential homes or young people that have experienced multiple placement breakdowns before being placed in a long-term family or independent placement. They are therapeutically trained and therefore able to address issues that occur as a result of a transition into a different environment, increasing the chances that the long-term placement will be successful and reducing multiple placement breakdowns and reliance on out-of-county placements.

The Transitional Carers would take a maximum of one transitional placement at any time and will provide intensive support for up to 24 weeks. They will work closely with the Therapeutic Team staff, who will advise on the best way to support the young people to maximise the benefits and success of future placements.

The Transitional carers receive extensive support from their supervising social worker and review meetings are held fortnightly with the child/young person's social worker, supervising social worker and the carers and monthly with any other agencies involved.

All transitional carers receive specialised training that looks at supporting the child through therapeutic parenting and they follow the same model as the Residential staff at Meadows View and Sunnybank.

# SECTION 18

## INSPECTIONS

## **Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW)**

As outlined in the CIW Inspection Handbook (2017) CIW's role is to inspect and regulate social care services to:

- provide independent assurance for people who use services about the safety, quality and availability of residential care and community based services in Wales;
- ensure that action is taken to secure improvement where standards are poor or people are placed at risk;
- improve the well-being and care of people using care and support services;
- promote the rights of those using care and support services;
- inform the public about the quality of care services and
- make sure registered providers meet and continue to meet requirements of their registration.

Every year the Fostering Service needs to complete a Self Assessment and quality review of its service and provide this to the Inspectorate. When inspections are undertaken, the inspector will arrange to meet with foster carers either individually or within a group in order to obtain feedback about the service.

Inspectors are expected to:

- carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and sensitivity;

- evaluate the work of the service objectively;
- report honestly, fairly and impartially;
- communicate clearly and openly;
- act in the best interests of people using services ;
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work; and
- produce proof of identity confirming their authority to enter and inspect.

The Inspectorate will complete a written report following each inspection, you may view a copy of the most recent inspection report via the CIW website.

You can contact the Duty Inspector at the CIW's office in Carmarthen: -

Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW)  
 Welsh Government Office  
 Sarn Mynach  
 Llandudno Junction  
 LL31 9RZ

Phone: 0300 7900 126

Email: [CIW@gov.wales](mailto:CIW@gov.wales)

The Fostering Team will notify CIW of significant events including:

- Death of a child placed with Foster Carers
- Serious illness or serious accident of a child placed with Foster Carers
- Outbreak at the home of a Foster Carer of an infectious disease which in the opinion of a registered medical practitioner should be notified
- Involvement or suspected involvement of a child placed with Foster Carer in prostitution
- Serious incident relating to a child placed with Foster Carers necessitating calling the police to the Foster Carer's home
- Any serious complaint about any Foster Carer
- Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with Foster Carers

# SECTION 19

## COMPLAINTS



## **How to address issues**

It is important that any issues, queries or concerns that you may have throughout your fostering career are dealt with appropriately and efficiently. It is hoped that we can work together to resolve issues informally, with shared understanding and effective partnerships.

In the first instance all matters need to be firstly discussed with your supervising social worker and or the social worker for the child in your care as appropriate, depending on the nature of the issue.

If you are not able to reach a satisfactory resolution, the matter will then need to be addressed with a Senior Social Worker within the fostering/ placements team. If the matter remains unresolved, the issue will be referred to the Team Manager of the Fostering or Placements Team.

In situations where the Team Manager has been unable to resolve the issue the Group Manager of Regulated Services will address concerns and may refer the matter to the Head of Childrens Services.

## **How To Make A Complaint, Comment, Suggestion Or Compliment About Social Care Services**

We want the services you receive to be the best possible and that's why your feedback is important to us. The feedback could be in the form of a comment, a suggestion on how we can improve, a compliment or, if you are unhappy with the services, you may want to make a complaint. You can feedback to us on behalf of someone else too.

The best way to make a complaint, suggestion, comment or compliment is to contact the Complaints Team in one of the following ways:-

- By telephone on 01656 642253

- By letter or fill in a Complaint Form and forward it to The Complaints Team, Wellbeing Directorate, Civic Offices, Level 2, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB. (We can arrange to post the form to you if you prefer).
- By email [social.services@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@bridgend.gov.uk) or [childrenscomplaints@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:childrenscomplaints@bridgend.gov.uk)

If you require any assistance to make a complaint, suggestion, comment or compliment, please contact the Complaints Team.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

### Stage 1 – Local Resolution

We will acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days of its receipt. You will be contacted within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement by the person looking into your complaint and they will offer to meet with you face-to-face or can discuss your complaint over the telephone if you prefer. The discussion will ensure that we understand your complaint and what you would like to happen.

When the complaint has been resolved, we will write to you within 5 working days of the date that your complaint was resolved.

### Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

If your complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1, you can request that your complaint be investigated by a person who is independent of the Council.

If your request is granted, we will write to you with a formal written record of your complaint (as we understand it) within 5 working days of the date of the request.

Before the investigation can start, you will be asked to confirm that our understanding is correct and also to confirm what you would like to

happen. The date on which the detail of the complaint is agreed will be the 'start date' for the complaint investigation.

A response to the complaint investigation should be sent to you within 25 working days of the 'start date'. If this is not possible, we will write to you and tell you why there is a delay and when you are likely to receive the response. This will be as soon as possible after the 25 working day deadline and no later than 6 months from the date we received your complaint.

In our response we will:

- Summarise your complaint;
- Describe the investigation undertaken;
- State whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- Explain what action will be taken (if any);
- Apologise where appropriate;
- Enclose a copy of the Independent Investigator's Report. (If there is a specific reason why we do not provide this, we will tell you);
- Offer you an opportunity to meet with us to discuss the response and the Independent Investigator's Report.
- Advise how you can complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales if you are still not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint.

**Other useful contacts:**

Children's Commissioner for Wales,  
Oystermouth House,  
Charter Court, Phoenix Way,  
Llansamlet,  
Swansea. SA7 9FS.  
Tel: 0808 801 1000  
Fax: 01792 765601  
Email: [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)

What does the Children's Commissioner for Wales do?

- Supports children and young people to find out about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Listens to children and young people to find out what's important to them

- Advises children, young people and those who care for them if they think they've been treated unfairly
- Influences government and other organisations who say they're going to make a difference to children's lives, making sure they keep their promises to children and young people
- Speaks up for children and young people in Wales on important issues

The Children's Commissioner works for every child in Wales who is:

- Up to the age of 18
- Up to the age of 21 if they've been in care
- Up to the age of 25 if they've been in care and are still in education

Summary of the Commissioner's powers:

- 1) The power to review the effect on children of exercise of functions or proposed exercise of functions of defined public bodies including Welsh Government.
- 2) The power to review and monitor how effective are the arrangements for complaints, whistleblowing and advocacy of defined public bodies in safeguarding and promoting the rights and welfare of children.
- 3) The power to examine cases in respect of individual children in certain circumstances.
- 4) The power to provide assistance to a child in certain circumstances.
- 5) The power to make representations to the Welsh Government about any matters affecting the rights and welfare of children which concern her and for which she does not have the power to act.
- 6) The Commissioner does not have the power to act in a number of defined circumstances:
  - a. Matters that have not been devolved to the National Assembly for Wales which include immigration and asylum, child poverty, justice and policing, and children in the military.
  - b. Where CAFCASS (the Children and Court Advisory Service) is able to act.
  - c. Where Welsh Ministers have functions in respect of family proceedings.
  - d. From enquiring about or reporting on any matter that is or has been the subject of legal proceedings.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales,

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae,  
Pencoed,  
Bridgend. CF35 5LJ.  
Tel: 0300 790 0203  
Fax: 01656 641199  
Email: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has legal powers to look into complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. The Ombudsman also investigates complaints where members of local government bodies have broken their authority's code of conduct. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies. The Ombudsman has a team of people who help consider and investigate complaints. The service is impartial and free of charge.

# SECTION 20

## WHISTLEBLOWING

## **Whistleblowing Policy**

Whistleblowing is where a person has a concern about danger or illegal activity that has a public interest aspect. This is different from raising an issue or complaint with regard to your fostering support, foster care agreement or working relationship with members of the local authority. These are addressed via our complaints policies and procedures.

As foster carers working with the local authority and our partner agencies in support of children you may be the first to identify concerns about malpractice. The local authority has a whistleblowing policy in place in order to encourage and enable you to raise serious concerns. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides legal protection for people raising issues within the public interest.

The local authority is committed to the highest standards of openness and accountability and is subject to a duty of candour under the Fostering Regulations. We recognise that it is a difficult decision to raise concerns and that you may be fearful. However this policy exists to support you to raise any issues that are in the public interest.

The local authority will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of you and will take action to protect you. However this does not extend to halting safeguarding, annual review or termination procedures.

### **Who and what can I blow the whistle about?**

You can raise your serious concerns about any aspect of service provision or conduct of officers or Members of the Council or others acting on behalf of the Council. Your concerns may relate to something which has already happened or is likely to happen in the future, this may include sexual, physical or emotional abuse, or something which endangers the health and safety of an individual. It will also include an attempt to cover up such issues.

### **How do I raise concerns?**

Initially concerns should be raised with your supervising social worker and or their line manager (Senior Social Worker in the fostering team). However, you may feel that your concerns are so serious or sensitive that you should raise them with a Chief Officer, for example a Director, the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer, or the Chief Internal Auditor. You may seek support to raise concerns from a Liaison Carer or the Fostering Network who can raise the concerns on your behalf.

Concerns expressed anonymously may, at the Council's discretion, be considered but are much less powerful. It is better to raise your concerns in writing but you may equally express your concerns verbally and have their detail recorded for you. Whilst you will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegations you make, you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for your concerns.

You may obtain independent, free, confidential advice in relation to "whistle blowing" from the charitable organisation, Public Concern at

Work Telephone 02074046609 or e mail [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk) or [whistle@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:whistle@pcaw.co.uk)

### **Is my identity kept Confidential?**

The local authority will do its best to protect your identity if you so wish, however there may be times where the investigative process may reveal your identity or you may be required to provide a statement and give evidence within criminal or disciplinary proceedings. The local authority will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure if evidence is required. If disclosure of your identity becomes unavoidable then the Council will support you.

### **What happens if my concerns prove to be unfounded?**

If you raise your concerns in the public interest, but they are proved to be unfounded, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make a malicious or vexatious allegation, your ongoing relationship with the local authority is likely to be affected.

### **What happens when concerns are raised?**

The action taken by the local authority will depend on the nature of the concerns raised. They may be investigated internally by management, internal audit; be referred to the Police; form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. All allegations of a serious nature will be reported immediately to the Monitoring Officer.

Within ten working days, the officer with whom your concerns are raised (the Contact Officer) will write to you:



- acknowledging that your concerns have been received;
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with your concerns;
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

There may be circumstances where information will not be shared with you in order to comply with a duty of confidence or in compliance with statutory duties.

The amount and frequency of contact between yourself, the Contact Officer and / or those officers tasked with investigating your concerns will depend upon the nature of the concerns raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. You may be accompanied by a representative from the Fostering Network or a Liaison Carer when you meet with any officer investigating the concerns.

Subject to legal constraints, the Contact Officer will inform you of the outcome of any investigation within 10 days of its conclusion.

### **What should you do if you are unhappy with the response to your concerns?**

The local authority hopes that you will be satisfied with the way that your concerns are dealt with but in the event that you are not so satisfied then you are welcome to contact (assuming that he/she has not previously been involved in dealing with your concern) the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer retains a record of concerns and their outcomes. **If you do take your concerns outside of the Council, you will need to ensure that you do not breach a duty of confidentiality.** The following possible contact points are suggested:

- Public Concern at Work Telephone 02074046609 or e mail [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk) or [whistle@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:whistle@pcaw.co.uk);
- The Fostering Network: Fosterline Wales 0800 316 7664
- South Wales Police, telephone 01656 655555 or e mail [headquarters@south-wales.pnn.police.uk](mailto:headquarters@south-wales.pnn.police.uk);
- Health & Safety Executive, telephone 0845 3450055 or e mail [hse.infoline@connaught.plc.uk](mailto:hse.infoline@connaught.plc.uk);

- Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, telephone 01656 641150 or e mail [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk).

# SECTION 21

## SAFEGUARDING

## **Safeguarding Policy**

The local authority has a safeguarding policy in place outlining the duties of the council in ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place to ensure that both children and adults live their lives free from harm abuse and neglect. It is not any one persons responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place but every individual has a responsibility to act if they have concerns.

It is important to know that everyone is responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and adults. It is essential that you are aware of the potential indicators of abuse and neglect and are clear about what to do if you have any concerns. Formal mandatory training child protection training for foster carers has to be completed for this reason.

### **Recognising and raising concerns about an adult or child where abuse or neglect is suspected.**

You may become aware of potential concerns about a child or adult in the following ways:

- A person may tell you.
- A person may say something that worries you.
- A third party may voice concerns.
- You may see something – an incident or an injury or other sign.

As a foster carer you may also become of aware of concerns about a child who you previously looked after who is now an adult.

You may need to take immediate action to protect/safeguard an adult or child at risk including contacting emergency services (this can include the police and emergency duty team). If immediate action is not required you may need to inform an appropriate member of staff or make a referral to the appropriate service.

Referrals regarding potential risks to children who are not placed with you need to be made to the MASH Team (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 01656 642320.

### **Emergency Duty Team**

➤ **Tel: (01443) 743665**

Referrals regarding potential risks to adults need to be made to the Adult Safeguarding Team on 01656 642477.

It is important that you also discuss any concerns, including those about which you have or intend to make a referral, with your supervising social worker or advise the duty worker in fostering if they are not available.

Where you have concerns regarding a child placed in your care both the child's allocated social worker or duty worker for the team need to be alerted as well as your supervising social worker or fostering duty worker in their absence. Every child placed in your care will have a separate placement agreement which will contain the contact details for the child's allocated social worker and their team manager to enable this.

It is important to be open and honest with children and young people about your role as a foster carer and that you need to share information with their social worker to protect them. The children's guides to fostering will assist with this.

### **Confidentiality**

Sharing confidential information without consent will normally be justified in the public interest:

- When there is evidence or reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm;
- When there is evidence or reasonable cause to believe that an adult is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, serious harm;
- To prevent significant harm to a child/ young person or serious harm to an adult, including through the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime.

However if you are in any doubt you may seek the advice and guidance of your supervising social worker or duty social worker in their absence.

Children are looked after by foster carers for many reasons, if a child is being placed with you because they have suffered abuse we will give you information about the nature of the abuse and the effect this may have on the child, their needs and their behaviour. There will be times where the local authority do not have a lot of information about a child who needs to be looked after, such as a family who is new to the area needing support. Children will sometimes begin to talk about abuse they have suffered once they are in placement and feeling safe. If this is so, it is important to follow the guidance in this section so that we can work together to protect the child appropriately.

### **Local Authority Staff**

Members of staff are subject to pre-employment vetting involving proof of identity, references, qualifications, health and DBS checks. There is also statutory guidance in place regarding checks required for volunteers, contractors and agency staff providing services to the local authority. Foster Carers are subject to regular DBS and Health Checks in accordance with Fostering Regulations. Local Authority staff and foster carers are required to undertake safeguarding training and remain up to date throughout their careers. The Local Authority has a Whistle Blowing Policy in place which provides guidance for staff to report concerns about local authority employees or the way the council operates.

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 there is a legal duty to refer information to the DBS if an individual is dismissed or removed from working with children and/or adults (in what is legally defined as Regulated Activity) because they meet the referral criteria. The Council has a duty to refer information to the DBS as both a regulated activity provider and as a local authority. Equally, the Council has an obligation to refer certain information about employees' conduct and matters relating to safeguarding to professional regulatory bodies such as Social Care Wales and the General Teaching Council for Wales.

All schools will have their own safeguarding policies defining the key members of staff to report concerns to and how these are recorded.

## **Media**

No member of staff or Foster Carer should contact the press directly or post information via the internet (see also social media). Employees and Foster Carers have a responsibility to conduct themselves in their private lives in a manner that does not compromise their position in the workplace or call into question their suitability to work with children, young people or adults at risk.

## **Definitions**

A **Child at risk** is a person under the age of 18 who:

- (a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm; and
- (b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs).

“Safeguarding means preventing and protecting children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers.”

Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures are currently only available online use the link below to download the Safeguarding App to your mobile phone:

[http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/wales\\_safeguarding\\_procedures/default/index.html](http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/wales_safeguarding_procedures/default/index.html)

**Physical abuse** means deliberately hurting a child or young person.

It includes: physical restraint; such as being tied to a bed, locked in a room inflicting burns cutting, slapping, punching, kicking, biting or choking, stabbing or shooting, withholding food or medical attention, drugging, denying sleep, inflicting pain, shaking or hitting babies, fabricating or inducing illness (FII).

**Emotional abuse** is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child.

It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development.

Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them. Children who are emotionally abused are often suffering another type of abuse or neglect at the same time.

Emotional abuse includes:

Humiliating or constantly criticising a child.

Threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names.

Making the child the subject of jokes, or using sarcasm to hurt a child.

Blaming, scapegoating.

Making a child perform degrading acts.

Not recognising a child's own individuality.

Trying to control their lives pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations.

Exposing a child to distressing events or interactions such as domestic abuse or drug taking.

Failing to promote a child's social development.

Not allowing them to have friends.

Persistently ignoring them.

Being absent.

Manipulating a child.

Never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes.

Never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.

### **Psychological Abuse**

Threats of harm or abandonment, coercive control, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks, witnessing abuse of others.

### **Neglect**

Means a failure to meet a person's basic physical, emotional, social or psychological needs, which is likely to result in an impairment of the person's well-being (for example, an impairment of the person's health or in the case of a child, an impairment of the child's development).

(SSWB Act Definition 2014)

**Contact abuse involves:**

Touching activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child, including penetration.

It includes:

Sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child's wearing clothes or not.

Rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus.

Forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity.

Making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate.

**Non-contact abuse involves:** Non-touching activities, such as grooming, exploitation, persuading children to perform sexual acts over the internet and flashing.

It includes:

Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts.

Not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others.

Meeting a child following sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them.

Online abuse including making, viewing or distributing child abuse images.

Allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images.

Showing pornography to a child.

Sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child exploitation).

(Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019)

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) -**

Is a form of sexual abuse that can include sex or any form of sexual activity with a child; the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children.



It involves some form of exchange. The exchange can include the giving or withdrawal of something; such as the withdrawal of violence or threats to abuse another person.

There may be a facilitator who receives something in addition to or instead of the child who is exploited.

Children may not recognise the exploitative nature of the relationship or exchange. Children may feel that they have given consent.

Any child can be sexually exploited irrespective of gender, ethnicity or sexuality.

CSE can be perpetrated in many different ways. The way in which children experience CSE is diverse and may be part of a complex picture of interrelated safeguarding issues. Online and offline exploitation often overlap.

Perpetrators of CSE come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, they are predominantly male but females do offend. They act as individuals, in groups and in gangs and offenders may be family members.

Peer-on-peer abuse needs to be understood in the context in which it occurs and children who abuse need support. All Wales Practice Guidance on children where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour is available for use in conjunction with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Children rarely disclose CSE and the identification of CSE is particularly reliant on the knowledge and understanding of practitioners and professionals. Everyone who works with children should be alert to the signs that a child is being sexually exploited and understand their duty to report a child at risk.

**Harmful sexual behaviours' (HSB) can be defined as:**

Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult.

This definition of HSB includes both contact and non-contact behaviours (grooming, exhibitionism, voyeurism and sexting or recording images of sexual acts via smart phones or social media applications).

**Financial abuse** (not contained with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures) Financial abuse could be misuse of Child's direct payment, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). It is likely to be linked to one or more other abuse categories.

Includes:

- Having money or other property stolen;
- Being defrauded;
- Being put under pressure in relation to money or other property;
- Having money or other property misused;

(SSWB Act Definition 2014)

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is illegal in England and Wales under the FGM Act 2003 (amended by sections 70-75, Serious Crime Act 2015) It is a form of child abuse and violence against women. FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. There is a mandatory reporting duty which requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s which they identify in the course of their professional work to the police.

### **Significant harm**

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in order to protect children. Significant harm is defined in the legislation as ill treatment or the impairment of health and development. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 section 47 to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found in their area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. A single, serious event of abuse, such as an incident of sexual abuse or violent assault, might be the cause of

significant harm to a child. However, more frequently significant harm occurs as a result of a long-standing compilation of events, which interrupt, change or damage a child's physical and psychological development. The significant harm resulting from the corrosive effect of long-term abuse is likely to have a profound impact on the future outcomes for the child.

### **Domestic violence and abuse**

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Young people in the 16 to 17 age group can also be victims of domestic violence and abuse.

### **Controlling behaviour**

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

### **Coercive behaviour**

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. A coercive or controlling behaviour offence came into force in December 2015. It carries a maximum 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both. Victims who experience coercive and controlling behaviour that stops short of serious physical violence, but amounts to extreme psychological and emotional abuse, can be able to bring their perpetrators to justice.

### **Hate Crime**

A Hate Incident is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender. Further information on Hate Crime (including how to report a hate crime) can be found on the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership website. Hate Crime Bridgend Community Safety Partnership

## **Modern slavery and human trafficking**

Modern Slavery is the term used within the UK and is defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises offences of Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking. These crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. Although human trafficking often involves an international cross-border element, it is also possible to be a victim of modern slavery within your own country. It is possible to be a victim even if consent has been given to be moved. **Children cannot give consent to being exploited therefore the element of coercion or deception does not need to be present to prove an offence.**

## **Adult Protection**

An **Adult at risk** is a person who:

- (a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect;
- (b) has need for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs); and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or the risk of it.

Safeguarding adults includes:

- Protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- People and organisations working together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect and to stop them from happening.
- Making sure people's wellbeing is promoted, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 specifies the categories of abuse which are physical, sexual, psychological / emotional, neglect and Financial

## **Indicators of abuse**

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples for each of the categories of abuse and neglect:

## **Physical abuse**

Hitting, slapping, over or misuse of medication, undue restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

### *Indicators:*

- No explanation for injuries or inconsistency with the account of what happened
- Injuries are inconsistent with the person's lifestyle
- Bruising, cuts, welts, burns and/or marks on the body or loss of hair in clumps
- Frequent injuries
- Unexplained falls
- Subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person
- Signs of malnutrition
- Failure to seek medical treatment or frequent changes of GP

## **Sexual abuse**

Rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not or could not consent and/or was pressured into consenting.

### *Indicators:*

- New emergence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- New difficulty sitting or walking
- Pelvic injury
- Bruises on inner thighs or around the genital area
- Anal or genital pain, bleeding, or irritation
- Bloody, torn, or stained undergarments
- Extreme agitation
- Withdrawal from social interactions
- Panic attacks, or emerging post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms
- Inappropriate, aggressive, or unusual sexual behaviour
- Suicide attempts

## **Psychological abuse**

Threats of harm or abandonment, coercive control humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks (coercive control is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats,

humiliation, intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim).

### **Types of psychological or emotional abuse**

- Enforced social isolation – preventing someone accessing services, educational and social opportunities and seeing friends
- Removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance
- Preventing someone from meeting their religious and cultural needs
- Preventing the expression of choice and opinion
- Failure to respect privacy
- Preventing stimulation, meaningful occupation or activities
- Intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse including cyber bullying
- Addressing a person in a patronising or infantilising way
- Threats of harm or abandonment

#### *Indicators*

- An air of silence when a particular person is present
- Withdrawal or change in the psychological state of the person
- Insomnia
- Low self-esteem
- Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour
- A change of appetite, weight loss/gain
- Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger
- Apparent false claims, by someone involved with the person, to attract unnecessary treatment

### **Neglect**

Failure to access medical care or services, negligence in the face of risk-taking, failure to give prescribed medication, failure to assist in personal hygiene or the provision of food, shelter, clothing; emotional neglect. Self-neglect can happen as a result of an individual's choice of lifestyle, or the person may be depressed, have poor health, have cognitive (memory or decision making) problems, or be physically unable to care for self.

#### *Indicators*

- Poor environment – dirty or unhygienic

- Poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene
- Pressure sores or ulcers
- Malnutrition or unexplained weight loss
- Untreated injuries and medical problems
- Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations
- Accumulation of untaken medication
- Uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction
- Inappropriate or inadequate clothing

### **Financial abuse**

In relation to people who may have needs for care and support and includes:

- an unexpected change to their will.
- sudden sale or transfer of the home
- unusual activity in a bank account
- sudden inclusion of additional names on a bank account
- signature does not resemble the person's normal signature
- reluctance or anxiety by the person when discussing their financial affairs
- giving a substantial gift to a carer or other third party
- a sudden interest by a relative or other third party in the welfare of the person.
- bills remaining unpaid
- complaints that personal property is missing
- a decline in personal appearance that may indicate that diet and personal requirements are being ignored
- deliberate isolation from friends and family giving another person total control of their decision-making;

Any of the above forms of abuse could be motivated by the personal characteristics of the victim. This may make it a hate crime. These involve a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's actual or perceived disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and transgender.

**South Wales Police Public Protection Unit**

This unit assists local officers with some of the most sensitive criminal investigations, providing support and guidance for cases such as child and adult protection, domestic abuse, sexual offences, missing people and mental health.

The department also participates in MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) with the probation service to effectively manage risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the force area.

The unit work with statutory partners and third sector agencies long after a case is closed in court to look after the wellbeing of victims and the general public.

The Police Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan Public Protection Unit can be contacted on 01656 305821.

### **Local Health Boards**

The Health Board works closely with other agencies such as the police, social services and education and has a duty to appropriately share information and safeguard adults and children at risk. Some of the situations children and adults at risk are affected by which require a safeguarding response include abuse & neglect, child sexual exploitation (CSE), domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), Mental Capacity Act (MCA), human trafficking and radicalisation.

### **Key Principles**



Effective safeguarding arrangements in every local authority area should be underpinned by two key principles:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

For services to be effective each practitioner and organisation must play their full part both individually and in collaboration; and

- A child-centred approach:

For services to be effective, they should be based on a clear understanding of the personal outcomes for the child and what matters to them. The rights of the child should be central to the approach and their best interests should always be paramount.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) guarantees every child the right to grow up healthy, happy and safe. This includes to be protected from harm and be appropriately supported to recover from abuse. Practitioners and professionals should adopt A Children's Rights Approach in line with the duty of due regard to the (UNCRC) and follow National Participation Standards.

Agencies must work together to provide a joined up response to safeguarding issues as set out in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

There is a statutory Duty to Report Children at Risk on relevant partners under Section 130 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

## **Safeguarding Summary**

Information sharing is central to good safeguarding practice. Practitioners must share information in accordance with data protection legislation. Data protection legislation allows for the sharing of information and should not be automatically used as a reason for not doing so. One of the specific circumstances which provides for information sharing is in order to prevent abuse or serious harm to others. When information is not shared in a timely and effective way, decisions about how to respond may be ill informed and this can lead to poor safeguarding practice and leave children at risk of harm.

We know that sensory impaired and disabled children are at an increased risk of being abused compared with their non-disabled / non-sensory impaired peers. They are also less likely to receive the protection and support they need when they have been abused. Practitioners and professionals should explicitly recognise the increased vulnerability of sensory impaired and disabled children to abuse and neglect, as well as the barriers they may face, especially around communication and provide for any additional safeguards needed to protect them. (Taken from CSE New guidance WPP)

# SECTION 22

## **COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS AGAINST FOSTER CARERS**

## **Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers**

Foster carers can be challenged about the care they provide in different ways and it is important that you are aware of this and know that you will be supported through the process.

In caring for someone else's child in your own home, the last thing a foster carer would perhaps expect is an allegation or complaint made against them. The realities of modern life however are such that allegations can potentially be made against any adult in a caring role. It is therefore of vital importance to acknowledge the possibility that it could happen to you and to consider what steps you and your family could take to make this less likely.

Be aware of your own and your family's limitations. The ability to recognise signs of stress and developing ways of coping with this is crucial to the well-being of all of us. Our tolerances are not fixed but will vary in accordance with a number of other factors in our lives. We will need a support system to cope in our lives – things that help us relax and the advice and assistance of our family/friends when we're troubled.

Make sure that you have all the available information concerning a child from Social Services before you agree to any placement. Details of any earlier damaging experiences, particularly those of an abusive nature, are vital. Get the best possible understanding of the child's care needs and identify actual or potential stresses, strains and risks. Your Supervising Social Worker has a particular responsibility in helping you to do this.

You will have been aware of an issue called "Safe Care". This involves keeping not only foster children safe, but yourselves and your family also. Through discussion with your family and your Supervising Social Worker you must adopt a Safer Caring Policy to include some safe care/work practices, which will offer protection to you all. This information is further explored in the Safer Caring Policy.

- Foster carers have to be accountable: they are caring for other people's children on behalf of the local authority.
- Fostered children are often the most vulnerable children in our society.
- Foster carers may be challenged about the care they are providing.
- Fostering involves all members of the household including the foster carers own children.

The local authority is required to retain records of all complaints and outcomes in order to continually review and improve services. This is a requirement within the fostering regulations.

## **Complaints**

There may be times where a person connected to the child in placement, such as an agency worker, family member or professional involved in the case for example may raise a dissatisfaction with the fostering service about the conduct of a foster carer or about the care provided to the child. The welfare of the child or young person in placement is the primary concern of the local authority when addressing issues or complaints. Complaints are addressed via the complaints procedure, details of which are provided within this handbook, however where a complaint is made the local authority will seek to address it informally and at the earliest opportunity. We may need to provide a written response to the person raising the complaint.

If the complaint raises a concern about the care falling below the expected standards within a foster placement, this may require further investigation and require an annual review to be undertaken.

The local authority strives to ensure openness and honesty however there may be occasions where the local authority is unable to share information with you, however it is rare that this is the case with complaints.

## **Allegation**

An allegation is where a concern is raised that a foster carer or household member has or may have behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child, committed a criminal offence against a child, or behaved in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children. Allegations are addressed via child protection procedures. Depending on the nature of the allegation we may not be able to disclose details of what has been said or by whom.

At every stage of a child protection process consideration must be given to whether a child/ren is at imminent risk of harm and whether emergency protective action needs to be taken. The All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 clarify how individual agencies should communicate and work together effectively in partnership in order to

identify vulnerable children, keep them safe from abuse and neglect and improve outcomes for them. The process is indicated below.

### **Child protection process:**

**Referral:** The person taking the referral within the local authority will record comprehensive details on the appropriate form and seek further information. The police should be notified as soon as possible if it is suspected that a criminal offence has been committed against a child. Depending on the nature of the referral either the police or the local authority will lead the investigation. Where there is clear evidence that a criminal offence has occurred the local authority may need to await the outcome of a police investigation.

**Assessment:** The local authority undertake a proportionate assessment to establish if the child is in need and requires protection. A strategy discussion may be required following the assessment. The person making the assessment must see the child and speak to or communicate with the child, to an extent where they are satisfied that the child is and feels safe. The assessment may be very brief and lead directly to a strategy discussion/meeting and /or care and support assessment.

**Strategy Discussion:** Phone call or face to face discussion between the Police and the local authority who share and discuss all the information received/gathered and decide on the next course of action.

**Strategy Meeting:** A formal meeting to discuss whether formal child protection enquiries need to be undertaken. This meeting is attended by the police, local authority staff, the staff member or professional making the referral, together with other staff members and professionals who can assist in the planning process for the child protection enquires, if they are to take place. These can include the school or health visitor for example.

**Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries by Social Services and/ or the Police:** At the strategy discussion/ meeting, a decision must be made on whether the child protection section 47 enquiries will be undertaken as a single agency or jointly, depending on the seriousness and type of abuse.

Information gathered during this formal stage of enquiries should be recorded in a care and support assessment that can begin before a child protection conference but it is unlikely to be concluded by the time the conference meets.

**Child Protection Case Conference:** A child protection conference and the preparation and the implementation of a child protection plan may follow the child protection section 47 enquiries. The child protection plan will be informed and updated by the core assessment of the child's needs, which runs in parallel with the section 47 enquiries.

### **Child Protection Process – foster carers**

There will be additional measures should there be any allegation or concern about abuse or suspected abuse in relation to a foster carer, or any member of the foster carer's household. Any such allegation or concern must be referred to the social services manager responsible for child protection, looked after children and fostering.

The child protection enquiries in this instance should not be carried out by anyone who has been involved in assessing the foster carer or who has operational responsibilities for the family placement /fostering service in the area. However supervising social workers can be important sources of information and may provide support to the foster carer. The placement support worker may also provide additional support to the foster carer throughout the investigation. A support worker from the Fostering Network may also be provided depending upon the foster carers preference.

### **The referral will follow the procedure set out above with the following additional measures:**

- The social worker will need to be informed of any looked after child in the household.
- Take any immediate steps necessary to ensure the protection of all children in the household.
- Take any immediate steps necessary to ensure the protection of the foster carer's own children.

- Ensure that no further placements are made pending the child protection enquiry.
- Convene a strategy meeting as soon as possible, to be chaired by a social services representative at a senior level;
- Inform CIW of all the allegations.

### **Strategy meeting attendance:**

- The senior social services manager with responsibility for child protection;
- A senior social worker from the fostering team
- The social worker for the child and senior or team manager;
- The foster carer's social worker;
- A police representative;
- 1 legal representative for the authority (depending on the nature of the allegation)
- CIW;
- LAC clinical nurse specialist/ named or designated child protection health professional;
- Other relevant agencies e.g. education representative;
- The person with the details of the referral;

### **The safety & needs of all children currently and previously in the placement will need to be considered.**

- Consider each child individually and make recommendations as to whether the foster child/ren should remain with the foster carers pending child protection section 47 enquiries. The views of the child should always be taken into account;
- Plan additional safeguards, if the child is to remain in the foster placement whilst the enquiries take place;
- The approval of the senior manager should be sought if it is recommended that the child remains in placement;
- Consider the safety and welfare of the foster carer's own children and any other children with whom they have regular contact;
- Consider any other employment or voluntary activity of the foster carer, which brings them into contact with children and may place a child at risk;



- Identify all children previously placed and whether there may be concerns in relation to them;
- Identify what information will be given to the foster carers, when and by whom, regarding the allegation and section 47 enquiries. The chair of the strategy meeting to confirm this information in writing to the foster carers.
- Identify who will support the foster carers during this process of investigation and how they will be kept informed. If the strategy meeting gives a staff member this role, their status must be made clear to all parties to avoid confusion;
- Make arrangements to advise the foster carers that no further placements will be made during the course of the child protection enquiries;
- The child's parent(s) should be informed at an early stage of the allegation and of the procedures to be followed, and should be offered support and advocacy. The disclosure of information to parents of other children in the placement should be carefully considered, particularly when a child has to be moved as the result of an allegation.
- Agree the manager who will receive the information on the outcome of child protection enquiries and the criminal investigation.
- A full record of the meeting will be made, including the reasons in the event of a decision to take no further action.

## **Support**

The person supporting the foster carers should ensure that the foster carers;

- Understand the concerns being expressed and arrange for the foster carers to verify and comment on the factual information given, unless this compromises any criminal investigation;
- Are informed of the child protection procedures that will be followed;
- Are informed of time scales set for the process;
- Are told what support is available to them and how to contact the Fostering Network and any other external support arrangements for foster carers made by the local authority;
- Are clearly informed of the outcome of the child protection enquiries/criminal investigation;

- Understand that witnesses, including support workers may be called to give evidence, in the event of a court hearing.

### **After the child protection 47 enquiries have been completed.**

An investigation outcome meeting will be held following completion of the child protection enquiries and /or criminal investigation to determine what should happen next. The attendance at this meeting should include the strategy meeting participants, staff and officers directly contributing to the child protection enquiries and criminal investigation and the child's advocate. This meeting will be convened by the social services manager with responsibility for child protection and will undertake the following tasks:

- Evaluate the information/findings gathered during the child protection enquiries and/or criminal investigation;
- Decide whether there is substance in the allegations;
- Decide whether further action is needed to safeguard any child in the light of the information gathered;
- Decide whether to convene an initial child protection conference in respect of the foster child/ren and /or any other children for whom there may be child protection concerns;
- Consider what information, regarding the outcome, should be given to the parents and /or caregivers of children who are subject of the allegations;
- Ensure support is available as required for the child and the foster carer;
- the foster carers should receive a letter from the chair of the strategy meeting giving details of:
  - The nature of the allegation;
  - The result of the child protection section 47 enquiries;
  - The decisions of the strategy meeting.

Following any child protection section 47 enquires, significant incident or complaint the fostering panel should always consider the foster carers' approval status. This will be undertaken as part of an Annual Review. A record of the allegation and the outcome of the child protection enquiries and/or criminal investigation should be placed on the foster carers' file. CIW will be notified of the outcome and all resulting actions.

## **Notice**

Foster carers subject to allegations may decide to give notice of their intention to cease fostering. The regulations allow foster carers to provide 28 days notice of their intention to resign after which the resignation becomes effective. It is likely that in the event of a foster carer deciding to resign at an early stage of child protection enquiries that the investigation will not be complete before it takes effect. In the event of the foster carer having already resigned, the fostering panel should receive a report concerning the outcomes of the child protection enquiries and /or the criminal investigation. It is essential to ensure a record of the panel discussion together with any advice or recommendations are placed on the foster carers' agency record. In the event of a request being made at a later date from other agencies for a reference, any response must include comment about recommendations or advice and give a clear indication that the foster carer resigned before the agency made a decision concerning their approval status.

The child protection section 47 enquiries and /or criminal investigation must be completed regardless of a resignation. Details about a foster carer removed from local registers as a direct result of allegations, whether substantiated or not, are submitted for inclusion under the POCA and POVA protocols and any other subsequent requirements directed by the Welsh Government.

## **Final Thoughts**

This information is lengthy and you may feel alarmed at the prospect of an allegation being made against you or your family. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to investigate all allegations of abuse. We acknowledge that the majority of foster carers provide children with a good quality standard of care and practice safer caring and it is rare for foster carers to be accused of abuse. However it is crucial that you and your family are aware of the issues and are prepared in advance in case it happens to you.

If an allegation is made, it will be fully investigated without any assumption being made about what has happened. Whilst the safety of

children has to be the first priority, foster carers have the right to be listened to as well. Whatever the outcome, the process of investigation is painful for all of those concerned. This information should at least provide you with the procedures, policy and advice to deal with such situations.

# SECTION 23

## **FAMILY LINK SHORT BREAK SCHEME**

### Family Link Short Break Scheme

The Family Link Service is set up to support young people with disabilities and their families' to access support via a short break scheme. The scheme offers anything from a few hours per week to up to a weekend per month (dependent on need).

The scheme offers the option for disabled children to have a vital break at the home of approved carers and enables both the children and families' have time off, where the children can experience new opportunities, while their families have time off to do other things or simply have a rest. The scheme is open to disabled children and young people from 0 – 18 years, although the majority of service users range from 3 – 17years.

The Family Link Service (short break scheme) sits within the fostering service and is overseen by a dedicated Supervising Social worker, who will make regular visits. The Short Break carers also receive allowances for when they look after the child and receive extensive training aimed at providing the carers with the skills for them to better support the children who use the service.

Referrals are made via the disabled children's team.

# SECTION 24

## BULLYING

## Bullying

Everyone involved in the lives of children has a shared responsibility to encourage acceptable behaviour and reduce the likelihood of bullying. Foster carers in particular need to be live to the potential signs of bullying, take steps to prevent it and ensure that agencies involved in supporting the child are informed.

It is important that children in our care are clear about what is acceptable behaviour, that bullying is not acceptable and what to do if they feel they are being bullied. You will need to have discussions about bullying and provide opportunities for the children to talk about this. You and others in the home will also need to act as role models to demonstrate to children what is appropriate behaviour.

Bullying can take place in the school, home and community and include:

- Teasing and name calling;
- Threats;
- Theft;
- Physical violence;
- Damage to belongings;
- Deliberately leaving people out of activities or events;
- Spreading rumours;
- Online bullying via e-mail or social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.
- By mobile phone, text message,

Bullying.co.uk is a useful website which contains advice and guidance about bullying, including:

## **Signs to watch for if you think a child may be being bullied**

You may be unsure if your child is involved in a bullying incident. He or she could be acting as a bully, being bullied or upset because they have seen others behaving badly. Keeping up to date recordings will help with this as you will be able to see if the child's behaviour is different on certain days or when they meet with certain people. If you suspect that your child is involved in bullying then look out for these signs:

- bruises
- broken or missing possessions
- becoming withdrawn, not talking, spending more time alone
- changes in eating habits
- changes in behaviour – becoming aggressive at home
- sleeping badly
- complaining of headaches or stomach aches
- wetting the bed
- worrying about going to school
- suddenly doing less well at school

But there could be other reasons for these signs, so try to avoid jumping to conclusions. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is there anything else bothering my child?
- Have there been changes at home like a new baby, or divorce or separation?

If there has not been any other changes and you suspect bullying may be the cause of the distress and anxiety, it is important to try and act as early as you can.



### **If a child is being bullied there are tips to help them:**

- Listen without getting angry or upset, put aside your own feelings and show you have listened by reflecting back to the child what they have told you
- Ask the child how they would like you take this forward so they don't feel excluded from decisions
- Reassure the child it is not their fault, that bullying is not about being weak and being a bully is not about being strong
- Try and encourage the child to appear confident even if they do not feel it, sometimes people can say nasty things as they want a reaction or to cause upset. Giving the impression they are not bothered can make it more likely the bully will stop
- Engaging in role plays for the child to practice responses can help
- Don't let the bullying dominate the child's life, encourage them to join a club that may help to build confidence, keep the problem in perspective and offer a chance to make new friends.
- Ease up on pressure in other areas like nagging about an untidy bedroom in the short term.
- Speak to the child's social worker and your supervising social worker

### **Things to avoid:**

- Do not approach the bully or the bully's parents
- Do not tell the child to hit and shout names back
- Do not dismiss their experience by saying it is 'part of growing up' as this teaches children that bullying is to be tolerated rather than stopped.

Remember that you are not alone in supporting the child. It is important to link in with your liaison carers, fellow carers, your supervising social worker and the child's social worker who can help you manage these challenging situations.

# SECTION 25

## SOCIAL MEDIA

**Social Media**

There are a number of issues to consider in respect of social media use.

It is not appropriate for foster carers to look up (search online for) family members of children who are placed in their care.

It is not appropriate for carers to add pictures of the children who are placed in their care on social media. The only instances where this is acceptable is if it has been discussed and agreed with the safeguarding social worker and consent has been given by the parents and/or LA. It is also the responsibility of the carer in these instances to ensure that you have full privacy settings on your account.

In some instances 'friend requests' or equivalent requests from looked after or previously looked after children may be sent to carers and their families. These requests must be discussed with supervising and safeguarding social workers prior to accepting online friendships with any placement or family members.

Information on social media is shared instantly, children and adults post personal information, share photos and their location through mobile devices.

Children who are looked after can potentially put themselves at risk by sharing too much information online. It is important to have discussions with children and young people about using the internet safely, not putting information online about:

- the location of their home
- their school
- photos of them where these locations can be recognised, such as a photo in their school uniform.

It is important to know that information put online can be manipulated and could be used by cyber bullies. Children and young people need to be aware of how to use the internet safely and not to 'friend' people who they do not know or trust or in the real world to help avoid such issues. It is also important that you and others around the child model safe and appropriate use of the internet including social media.

Children who are looked after may be more likely to present risky behaviour to others. They may act out their emotions in the online world, through the games they play or through their interaction with others. It is important to have discussions about real world actions and consequences, particularly how behaviour can impact on the feelings of others. This is also discussed in the Bullying chapter of the handbook.

It can be difficult putting rules in place about safe use of the internet where they have come from a home where this was not monitored. The young person may feel like their privacy is being disregarded. It is important to ensure that you are clear about the reasons for putting such measures in place and that these are rules in place for everyone, so the child / young person is not made to feel singled out.