



# **NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL**

## **FOSTERING SERVICE**

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

## **Introduction to the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose**

This statement has been produced in accordance with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 (3(1)) and is referred to as “the Statement of Purpose”. Regulation 4 details the requirements for the review of the Statement of Purpose. The National Assembly for Wales has issued National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and elaborates further requirements as to its content and arrangements for its review.

This Statement of Purpose provides information about Newport’s Fostering Service. It gives an outline of the aims and objectives of the service and some of its key features. It will be provided to foster carers approved by Newport and to applicants beginning an assessment to become a foster carer. It will be available to social workers considering making a placement with the Service in paper and electronic copies at their office base. It will be made available on request to parents, children and young people. However, a Children’s Guide will contain a summary of the content, as well as other information, and will be of more interest and relevance to most children and young people.

In addition to the Statement of Purpose, there is a range of specific and procedural documents that reflect the aims, objectives, service principles and standards set out in the Statement of Purpose.

The Statement of Purpose is updated on an annual basis, reflecting changes that are being made to improve the service. Service improvement proposals will be informed by consultation with parents and children/young people, social workers, as well as foster carers, staff in the fostering service and other stakeholders. The outcomes of consultation throughout the year will be considered between January and March each year, so that a revised Statement of Purpose is in place from 1 April.

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## 1. Management Structure

- The Corporate Director ( Care and Customers) is **Mike Nicholson**
- The Head of Children's Services is **Sally Jenkins**
- The Service Manager for the Fostering Service is a third tier officer – **Lyn Richards**
- There are two Team Managers for the Fostering Service, which includes the Short Break Service, who both report to the Service Manager. **Maggie Bain as Team Manager for Fostering** has responsibility for recruitment, assessment, support, training and supervision of foster carers. **Catherine Hywood as Team Manager for the Matching and Placement Support (MAPS) Team** has responsibility for matching and making placements and providing foster carers and residential placements with a multi-agency, therapeutic support service.

## 2. Key Responsibilities

The main responsibilities of the Fostering Service are to recruit families that wish to become foster carers for Newport City Council, provide pre-approval training, assess the applicants, approve them and then provide post-approval training and support.

The MAPS Team are based within the Fostering Service and have responsibility for matching and making placements for Looked After Children in both fostering and residential settings, where possible within Newport's own resources but if necessary with Independent Providers.

MAPS also work closely with the Fostering Team to provide a multi-agency therapeutic service to foster carers, which supports placements from the earliest opportunity and develops a therapeutic approach to caring for the children placed with Newport City Council foster carers.

In providing these key responsibilities the Fostering Service works within the legislative framework of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and the accompanying National Minimum Standards.

We also undertake viability assessments on persons identified as potential carers for children prior to legal proceedings being instigated should alternative arrangements be required. In addition we undertake assessments under the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 Regulation 38 if immediate placements are required for children and will allow children to be placed with those known to them.

## 3. Aims of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service aims to provide a range of foster care to children and young people who are looked after by Newport City Council. In addition, the Fostering Service provides a Short Break Scheme for disabled children whose assessed need is for a short break from their main carer. The service aims to provide the following types of placements to children and young people from birth to 18 years of age:-

- Emergency and short term care
- Permanent and long term foster care
- Kinship care – care by friends or family members who are approved as foster carers
- Respite care for children to support them in the community or with other foster carers
- Placements for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

- Short break care for disabled children – up to 120 days care per year

In addition, the Fostering Service includes:

- Supported Lodgings - which provides an accommodation service to young people 16-18 years of age
- From 6.4.16 it will be possible for young people to remain with their carers under a “When I’m Ready” arrangement – if agreed to be suited to all parties
- Private Fostering Officer who has responsibility for children and young people placed in private foster care. There is also responsibility for advertising the service available. This Service is inspected under separate Regulations – Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) (Wales) Regulations 2006

The overall aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that children and young people who cannot live at home live in an environment that keeps them safe from abuse and neglect, and encourages their emotional, health and educational development.

#### **4. Objectives of the Service**

- To provide a stable home environment for children and young people who are placed with Newport City Council foster carers to allow them the opportunity to reach their developmental potential.
- To provide a service that is committed to keeping the needs of the looked-after child/ young person as central to its purpose.
- To work within a clear and accountable framework for matching children and young people’s needs to the skills of the foster carers which takes account of potential risks
- To promote the racial, cultural and religious identity of children and young people and give consideration to the gender, sexuality, disability of fostered children and young people when identifying a placement.
- A commitment to improving placement choice, by recruiting foster carers from diverse backgrounds that reflect the city of Newport.
- The operation of a competency based foster care system of assessing, reviewing and supervising foster carers.
- To provide a range of carers whose skills and abilities meet the needs of children and young people placed in their care
- To provide qualified staff to supervise foster carers.
- To operate a referral process, working in partnership with the child care social work teams, which reflects the needs of the children and young people as identified by the National Assessment Framework.
- To work in partnership with child care teams, Independent Reviewing Officers and other Agencies to support the implementation of the individual children and young people’s care plan.
- The work of the multi-agency MAPS Team aims to provide a holistic support package to foster carers using a therapeutic approach to promote a shared understanding of the child’s past experiences and minimise the risk of placement disruption.
- To operate appropriate information systems that will provide the opportunity of collating and monitoring relevant data with which to measure the outcomes for looked-after children that will achieve or exceed the national minimum standards for foster care.

- To provide a professional service that helps to maximise positive outcomes for looked-after children.
- To respect foster carers as partners in the provision of a professional service.
- To continuously monitor, evaluate and improve its services.

## 5. Services available to prospective carers, and approved carers

The following services are available to prospective foster carers

- A speedy response to enquiries
- Discussion with dedicated staff within the Fostering Team, provision of written material allowing them the opportunity to consider their interest further and access to the council's website which includes information regarding fostering.
- A home visit by a member of the Fostering Team to explore matters in more detail.
- The completion of DBS checks and medicals.
- Attendance at the Skills to Foster Course (devised by Fostering Network)
- Attendance at Induction training for prospective foster carers – following the completion of the Skills to Foster Course.
- Completion of a B.A.A.F. Form F assessment which is then presented to our Foster Panel where a recommendation as to approval is made.

The following services are available to approved foster carers

- Support advice and formal supervision
- Annual review
- Individual training and development plan
- Rolling training programme
- Provision of written guidance
- Access to the Qualification Credit Framework Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care, Children & Young people
- Insurance cover
- Access to respite care
- Out of hours and telephone support – by fostering service staff rota – to be available shortly
- Out of hours support – by Emergency Duty Team
- Membership of Fostering Network
- A range of support groups e.g. Men Who Care group ; group for carers of children under 5
- Foster Carer Forum – attended by the Head of Service and Cabinet Member for Education & Young People
- Mentoring support from experienced carers for newly approved foster carers
- Multi-agency therapeutic support from MAPS accessed via TIER 1 & TIER 2 of the service
- Direct therapeutic work with both the Foster Carer and the Child by MAPS Clinical Psychologist
- Advice and guidance from the Consultant Social Worker within the Matching And Placement Support Team
- Learning & Development opportunities provided by the MAPS Team
- Fees payment levels according to skills and abilities – under review
- Counselling, if identified as a specific need
- Access to specialist education advice
- Access to specialist health advice
- Access to specific support groups.
- Leisure passes

The following services are available to foster carers' birth children:

- Attendance at events provided for the family e.g. visit to the pantomime
- Leisure passes for use at Newport City Council leisure facilities

## **6. The Qualifications and Experience of the Fostering Team**

The Fostering Service consists of two teams of staff

The assessment , training, support and supervision section of the Team has :

- One Team Manager
- Two full time Senior Practitioners
- Twelve Social Workers
- One Social Work Assistant ( 32 hours per week )
- One fixed term Social Work Assistant – until 31.3.16
- One Business Support Team Leader (responsibilities across Resources)
- One team administrator ( responsible across both teams )

The Matching And Placement Support Team has :

- One Team Manager
- One Consultant Social worker
- One Social Worker
- One Social Worker Assistant
- Three Placement Support Workers
- Two part time Education Co-ordinators (job sharing)
- One part time Lead Clinical Psychologist (3 days a week)

MAPS are a multi-agency team consisting of colleagues from social services, health and education, all with a wide variety of skills, experience and knowledge of working with children and young people, specifically around some of the difficulties our Looked after children and young people face.

All Team Manager, Social Worker, Consultant Social Worker and Senior Practitioner posts are held by qualified social workers. Additionally our Consultant Social Worker holds a qualification in play therapy. Both Educational Co-ordinators are qualified teachers. Our placement support workers hold their NVQ level 3 qualifications in working with Children and Young People. Our Clinical Psychologist is fully qualified.

## 7. Procedures and Processes

### 7.1 Recruitment

- Enquiries from prospective carers are welcomed and it is preferred that these be via telephone or e-mail.
- Within 24 hours of contacting the service verbal information will be provided and, if the person enquiring wishes to take their interest further, and are considered suitable at this stage, then our leaflet “Fostering for Newport –Working together hand in hand “ will be sent out or ideally e-mailed together with the assessment process leaflet. At this stage brief family details will be taken and checks will be made using the council database. Enquirers are given an overview of the approval process should they wish to take their interest further.
- Within 72 hours of the information being sent to prospective applicants we will contact them to arrange a home visit should they wish to progress their interest.
- A fostering officer will undertake a home visit to provide more information about the process of becoming a foster carer, the role of foster carers and the support provided by the fostering service. This visit will also provide an opportunity for some brief discussion about the applicant’s interest in fostering and their ability and capacity to become foster carers for Newport.
- It is possible that issues may arise at this early stage which may mean the applicants would not be suitable as foster carers, or the applicants may decide they no longer wish to continue their interest. Persons who wish to continue their application will be invited to attend a pre-approval training course “*Skills to Foster*”, which is usually held six times per year. Six weeks after the completion of this training the applicants will also be expected to attend three “*Induction Training*” sessions – during the period of their assessment.

### 7.2 Assessment and Approval

- The fostering assessment process includes statutory checks, medical assessments, and employment and personal references which will be undertaken for all applicants. DBS checks will also be required for any other adult living in the household, or regular visitors who are over the age of 18 years
- Following receipt of a formal application, a social worker will be appointed to carry out the fostering assessment. The assessment will consider the applicants’ suitability to care for other people’s children. This will include home visits, ‘homework’ on specific issues raised in the training course and work completed by the applicants to explore personal histories, relationships within their families, attitudes and values, and assessing whether the applicants have the skills and attributes which would indicate the potential to meet nationally agreed core competencies. Assessment of home conditions will also be undertaken.
- Assessments are undertaken in accordance with Fostering Regulations and are completed using the BAAF Assessment forms. The assessment process commences from the point of attendance at the Skills to Foster course.
- If an issue arises during the course of an assessment which requires a decision as to the future direction of the assessment, and this cannot be resolved by discussion between the assessing social worker and the applicant or by reference to the Fostering Team Manager, this would usually be referred at an early stage to Newport Foster Panel for guidance.
- If during the assessment any information comes to light which would mean applicants are not deemed suitable to become foster carers and would be precluded from fostering for Newport City Council then there would be no validity in continuing the assessment, and it would be ended. The applicants will be advised of the reasons for this if possible but there are occasions where Social Services may decide that it is not appropriate to advise the applicants of the reason for this decision.

- Should we choose to end the fostering assessment prior to its conclusion there is no formal right of appeal. An appeal can only be lodged if the assessment has been completed and been considered by Foster Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.
- Completed assessments are considered by Newport Foster Panel which makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker on approval and the terms of the approval. Applicants are encouraged to attend Foster Panel and are provided with information regarding Panel membership and procedures.
- Foster carers can appeal against this decision within set timescales, or request that their situation be considered by an independent panel (Independent Review Mechanism).

### **7.3 Training and Support**

- Each foster carer will have a training and development plan which is linked to their annual review.
- Following approval, foster carers are offered a comprehensive rolling training programme that reflects their knowledge, skills and developmental needs.
- All foster cares are supervised by a supervising social worker on a regular basis and supervision is recorded. Carers will be required to sign those records and retain a copy.
- Outside office hours, foster carers will be able to access the out of hours fostering service via telephone. This is facilitated by members of staff from the Fostering Team and operates during specific periods – to recommence in the near future .The Out of Hours Standby Team can be contacted for advice and guidance
- Foster carers may access the Education Co-ordinators based in the MAPS Team for advice and support to ensure children’s educational achievements are maximised.
- Foster carers have access to the Clinical Nurse Specialist (LAC) for advice on the health and health promotion of looked-after children.
- Foster carers who require respite on a planned basis can access respite services with other foster carers via the fostering team if it is part of the child’s care plan.
- Foster carers requesting support to care for children they have placed with them can access the Matching and Placement Support Team services.
- Foster Carers can access a service from MAPS either via TIER 1 when a child becomes looked after or TIER 2 for children who are already looked after.
- MAPS will provide a tailored package of support and complete specific focussed therapeutic work with foster carers and their children to support placements and care planning.

### **7.4 Review**

- All carers approval status is reviewed annually, or more frequently if recommended by Foster Panel.
- The Fostering Service is reviewed annually via a Quality of Care report compiled by the Service Manager and Team Manager which considers the work undertaken in the preceding year and identifies goals for the coming year – this includes numbers of approvals and termination of approvals; numbers of referrals and children placed, numbers of concerns, complaints or allegations, budgetary matters.
- The Fostering Service is also reviewed on an annual basis via the C.S.S.I.W inspection of fostering services.

## **8. Payments to Carers**

The authority makes payments to carers in a number of ways:

- Fostering allowances to carers in respect of each child placed. These allowances are divided in to age bands and comply with those recommended by the Welsh Government. Allowances are for the care of the child.
- Carers now receive a Placement Fee which is also related to the age of the child.
- Career and specialist carers receive an additional payment in recognition of their enhanced level of skills and abilities.

## **9. Quality Assurance**

- A quality assurance process is in place in respect of all assessments and annual reviews prior to their submission to the Foster Panel
- Exit questionnaires and interviews of foster carers are carried out by the Quality Assurance Officer.
- End of placement reports are collated to inform future planning.
- Questionnaires are collated from applicants attending the Foster Panel with a view to constantly reviewing the process.
- The Authority will be considering implementing a feedback questionnaire with children and young people who return home or move placements.
- Monitoring as required within Regulation 42 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 is undertaken on a monthly basis and evaluated by the Service Manager and Team Manager.
- The quality and effectiveness of the complaints procedure will be monitored via internal mechanisms and via discussion with the Children's Rights Officer and Be Heard. The data collated from the monitoring process by the Fostering Service feeds in to the Council's overall report regarding complaints and compliments

## **10. Complaints and Allegations**

The full procedure on making a complaint regarding the provision of services to a child or family is available from the Fostering Service and available on the Newport City Council website.

We believe it is best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If the complainant feels that they have a complaint, it should be raised with the person that they are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing the complaint then the member of staff will record this in an appropriate way.

There are two complaints procedures that Newport City Council adheres to : –

- Social Services Complaint and Compliments Policy and Procedure
- Corporate Complaints Compliments Policy and Procedure.

Both have the same timescales to deal with complaints, but differ in the way that we investigate at Stage 2.

Social Services Complaints Procedure is for service users and representatives of service users. The Corporate Complaints Procedure is for any other persons such as foster carers complaining about their personal circumstances.

The Children Rights and Complaints Officer will responsible for managing all formal complaints.

## **Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

The Children Rights and Complaints Officer will pass the complaint to the member of staff who has the best understanding of the issues involved. That member of staff will respond directly to the person who has made the complaint.

The Children Rights and Complaints Officer will:

- formally acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it
- ensure that the complaint is resolved within 10 working days. If the complaint requires further time to be dealt with they will seek consent from the complainant.
- ask the complainant to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- deal with your concern in an open and honest way
- make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

A complaint will not normally be processed if the issue is 12 months or older. This is because it's better to look into the complaint while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

However, a complaint will be considered if there are strong reasons why the complaint was not brought to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.

Any representative may make a complaint on behalf of someone else in the following circumstances:

- they have been asked to do so by the person they are representing
- the person they are representing is a child
- the person they are representing lacks capacity as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005
- the person they are representing has died (in appropriate circumstances)

If you are making a representation on behalf of somebody else, we'll need confirmation of their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Investigation**

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the response they receive at Stage 1, the complainant can request that the matter be investigated by someone who is not involved with the service.

The complainant will be informed who will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the specific Service to look into it and provide a response to the complainant. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the Authority.

If the complaint is a Social Service Policy Complaint an independent investigator will be appointed to undertake the investigation. In the case of a child, at this stage an independent person is also appointed to take part in the formal consideration and any discussion about the action the Authority should take (in accordance with the Children' Act 1989). The independent person's role is to oversee the handling of the complaint. This person may be an employee of the Authority but must not be associated with Social Services in any way.

The officer investigating your complaint will clarify the complaint and any resolutions with the complainant. The officer will look at all the relevant files, notes, e-mail etc., interview any

person/staff and examine our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance that relate to the complaint.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 25 working days. If your complaint is more complex, the Children Rights and Complaints Officer will :

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect the investigation to take.
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The investigator will speak and or meet the complainant and will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues are that the complainant has raised.

### **Outcome**

If we formally investigate your complaint, the Children Rights and Complaints Officer will let you know the outcome in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be over the phone, by letter or e-mail, for example. In some instances it will be necessary to produce a longer report that will explain the findings of the investigation.

If it is a Social Services Complaint Procedure report, the Strategic Director (People) responsible for Social Services will respond to the report with an accompanying letter detailing any actions that may be required to resolve the complaint.

### **Public Service Ombudsman for Wales**

If the complainant remains unhappy with the investigators report, they may take their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman at:

### **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, Bridgend. CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0845 601 0987

e-mail: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

[www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

**If you wish to complain elsewhere you may contact:**

**Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales**

South East Wales Regional Office

Government Buildings, Rhydycar, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 4UZ

Tel: 0300 062 8888

**Care Council for Wales**

South Gate House, Wood Street, Cardiff CF10 1EW

Tel:02920 226257

**Children's Commissioner for Wales**

Oystermouth House, Charter Court, Phoenix Way

Llansamlet, Swansea, SA7 9FS

## **Statement of Purpose – Short Break Care**

Newport Short Breaks Care is part of the Children's and Family Division within Newport City Council Wellbeing and Housing.

The scheme has a small number of carers, offering overnight breaks to children.

The Newport Short Break Scheme regularly recruits carers by using a range of methods – encompassing use of media advertising and community networking – which are regularly reviewed.

Enquiries receive a rapid response, which includes written information sent on the day of enquiry and the offer of a home visit within 2 weeks.

Short Break Carers are prepared and assessed using BAAF Form F assessment format and in house preparation groups. Approval is given via the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker. Carers are reviewed annually via Newport Foster Panel.

Each carer is allocated a link worker to offer support and supervision. Post approval training is also offered by Newport Short Break Scheme.

## **Principles and Standards of Care - Newport Short Break Scheme**

1. The aim of the Scheme is to provide short breaks to disabled children depending on their assessed need.
2. The Scheme will promote a standard of care that is safe, reliable and enjoyable, for the disabled children and their families using the service.
3. The Scheme will provide carers who are professional and caring in their attitude and approach to the work and who maintain confidentiality.
4. Care will be designed to meet as far as possible the individual's needs of each child outlined in his/her profile.
5. Care provided will place value and diversity and promote equality.
6. The service will develop, through its carers, a standard of care that helps a child learn to deal with discrimination in all its forms, by raising carers' awareness of discrimination and its impact on the child.
7. The Scheme will expect carers to offer each child encouragement to develop and pursue his/her interests, and help him/her access opportunities so to do.
8. The Scheme will encourage carers in enabling children to access a wide range of activities to help further each child's inclusion in the community and community activities.
9. The standard of care will be designed to enhance each child's sense of worth and promote his/her wellbeing, and help prepare him/her for increasing independence by working with parents and other engaged in this task.
10. The Scheme will promote the safe care of children by use of training/preparation, written guideline (currently the Shared Care Network guidelines – Safe and Sound), supervision and support to carers.
11. Newport Short Break Scheme aims to be responsive to the views of users and to promote and encourage user representation and consultation, by encouraging carers and service users to give feed back via annual review, LAC Review and evaluation sheets to the Scheme on the service they receive.

## **Aims and Objectives**

Newport Short Break Scheme aims to provide family care for children and young people who have a learning and/or physical disability, and who live in the city of Newport.

In order to meet our overall aim, our objectives are:

1. To create the opportunity for children who have disabilities to enjoy time away from home, to experience new friendships and enrichment to their lives and to enhance a sense of wider inclusion in the community.
2. To enable parents of children who have disabilities to have regular breaks.

## **The Scheme's Objectives are:**

1. To recruit, train and assess prospective short break carers and to present their applications to a properly regulated approved panel. Activity assistants and sitters are approved in accordance with our procedures.
2. To offer carers efficient, reliable, well informed and regular support and training.
3. To review carers annually.
4. To ensure all carers are reimbursed accurately and regularly.
5. To visit the child and family requiring the service and ensure the most appropriate link with a carer is made taking into account the child's needs, cultural and religious requirements and the type of service requested.
6. To take part in reviews of children who use our service and regularly monitor their links.
7. To ensure that all care agreements and placement agreements are in place and signed by all relevant parties.
8. To maintain a current and accurate waiting list and maintain unmet needs of the children.
9. To maintain accurate and up-to-date records on all its work.