



**Neath Port Talbot County Borough
Council**

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2019-2020

Our Mission Statement

Neath Port Talbot Fostering Service aims to provide safe, stable. High quality care for children and young people; with foster carers who are skilled and motivated to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Contact us

Neath Port Talbot Fostering Service

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Registered Manager Joanne Goodwin

The fostering service staff

The fostering service are a team of managers, social workers, support workers, a psychologist, therapist, a recruitment officer and business support staff. All of the staff in the fostering service are experienced and suitably qualified to do their jobs. Staff have regular supervision and training to support them to do their job.

Values and principles

- ✓ We want to ensure that children and young people feel happy and well cared for in the place that they live.
- ✓ We believe that children and young people should be treated as individuals and that we should listen to what matters to them.
- ✓ We believe that all children and young people who are living with carers should be safe and protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation.
- ✓ We believe that all children should have the opportunity to develop secure and stable relationships that that they are able to have permanency. Where children and young people are not able to live with their birth families then we aim to ensure that they can have permanency in high quality long-term placements.

Aims

NPT Fostering aims to meet the needs of children and young people who experience care by:

- ✓ Providing placements which are safe and caring and in a stimulating environment which improves their self-esteem, life chances, and their achievements.
- ✓ Providing children with care and support which meets their cultural, Religious, ethnic and linguistic needs and any support in relation to their gender identity and sexuality. This includes the active offer of communication through the Welsh language.
- ✓ Providing placements within the boundaries of Neath Port Talbot so that children can continue to live near the communities that they are familiar with and maintain links with their family, school, leisure and health services.
- ✓ Supporting young people to return home if it is safe for them to do so
- ✓ Supporting young people to remain living with their carers after until they are ready to move onto independence

Objectives

- ✓ We want to improve outcomes for children and young people
- ✓ We will ensure that all children have an active offer of advocacy, and are able to access an advocate to support them with specific issues
- ✓ We want to ensure that we have enough foster carers with the right skills to meet the needs of children and young people
- ✓ We want to make sure that only the children who need to be looked after to be safe are in care. We will support children being rehabilitated to their families when this is safe to do.
- ✓ We will provide support to help families to remain together by providing services that allow families to be able to parent their children in the community or to provide them with a support break if this is needed.
- ✓ We will ensure that our foster carers are supported and have the skills that they need to look after the children in their care.
- ✓ We will develop our services by listening to what children, carers and families tell us.

What services we provide

We offer a range of placements for children and young people:

- Short term placements
- Long term Placements
- Respite placements
- Parent and Child placements
- Connected person placements

- When I am Ready
- Emergency placements

Recruitment and assessment

Initial Enquiry

When someone contacts us because they are interested in fostering a member of our team will make contact to discuss their interest and potential suitability.

Home visit

If appropriate a home visit will be arranged. One of our social workers will visit and will discuss in more detail what type of fostering someone may be interested in, and their personal circumstances and what services we can offer to support carers including information about financial support. At this stage we undertake DBS checks, and CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales), health and local authority checks.

Preparation training

When satisfactory checks are received all applicants are required to attend preparation training called 'skills to foster'. The training is held jointly with Foster Swansea applicants and provides prospective foster carers the opportunity to learn more about the expectations of being a foster carer and to hear about other carers own experiences.

Assessment

Once training is completed a comprehensive assessment is undertaken by a social worker. Together with the applicant/s the social worker will gather evidence of their skills, qualities and competencies. The assessment will consider:

- The individual profiles of applicants
- Relationships and partners
- Applicants support networks
- Children in the household
- Any other adults in the household
- Description of family life
- Valuing diversity
- Parenting capacity

The assessment must include references from at least 3 people addition to employer references and ex-partner and applicants children's references (if applicable). References are confidential unless the referee has given consent for the information to be disclosed to the applicant.

A report is written of the assessment and this is shared with the applicant/s and the social worker will make a recommendation on the applicant's suitability to be a foster carer.

Fostering Panel

The fostering panel is made up of a variety of professionals including independent members a foster carer and a care experienced person. Applicants are encouraged to attend the panel. The assessing social worker will present their report to the panel who will make their recommendation on the applicant's suitability to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Agency Decision Maker

In Neath Port Talbot the Head of Children and young people's services is the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). The ADM considers the report, any relevant paperwork and the panel recommendation before making a final decision on the applicant's suitability. Applicants are informed in writing of the outcome of the ADM decision.

The right to appeal

Where the Agency Decision Maker does not approve an application or makes a decision to terminate the approval of an existing foster carer, then the applicant/foster carer is notified in writing of their options. Applicants have the right to have the decision considered by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The IRM is an independent panel which provides an independent review of the decision, and if required will refer the matter back to the Fostering Panel for reconsideration before a final decision is made by the ADM.

Review of foster carers

All foster carers have an annual review. This is the opportunity to appraise the least year of their fostering career. It is a chance to look back on their achievements and to look at setting new goals for the year ahead. The review takes into consideration the views of the children and young people who are placed with the foster carer, and the views of the child's social worker. The review is also an opportunity to demonstrate what learning the carer has undertaken and to

identify areas for development. The review is chaired by a member of the team, who is not the foster carers social worker and a report and recommendations are made.

The foster carers 1st review after their approval is presented to the fostering panel and their review every three years thereafter.

A carer review will be held if there is an allegation or complaint made in respect of the carer, or if the carer wishes to change their approval status or has a significant change in their circumstances. In these circumstances the review must be considered by the fostering panel before a decision is made by the ADM.

Statutory checks

Medical Checks and DBS checks are updates every three years for foster carers. It is also a requirement that all household members over the age of 18 have a DBS check.

Support for foster carers

Supervision of foster carers

All of our foster carers have a supervising social worker who will regularly be in contact with the foster carers and will provide formal supervision every 6 weeks.

Visits to foster carers

Visits to foster carers will be made by the fostering social worker and the social worker for the child in addition to other professionals, such as health professionals. The frequency of visits will depend on the needs of each placement but there must be a minimum monthly contact between the fostering service and the foster carer. Usually visits are more frequent.

It is expected that all foster carers have at least 1 unannounced visit per year.

Out of Hours/Emergency support

Outside of office opening hours, foster carers have access to the on call telephone service which is run by the managers/deputy managers in the team. The service is available 365 days a year up to 11pm and at weekends. In addition all foster carers are able to access support from the Local Authority's emergency duty team.

Policies and Procedures

Once approved, all foster carers receive a foster carer's handbook which details the policies and procedures for the service to aid them with their fostering task, along with information on finance, health and safety, managing behaviours, complaints etc.

Allowances

All approved foster carers receive an allowance for the children they look after. The allowances are set in line with the Welsh Government Minimum Payments for foster carers and are based on the age of the child. Some foster carers will also receive a professional fee for each child that they look after. The fee relates to the resource they provide, the age of the child and their level of qualification (see finance policy for further detail)

Training

All foster carers are required to undertake core training and we offer a range of training courses, materials and workshops which are designed to support foster carers to meet the needs of the children in their care. Where specific training is required this will be provided. Foster carers are required to undertake core training in their first year of approval and to complete a minimum of 3 days training per year. Training is held on weekdays, weekends and in evenings.

Foster Carer Support Groups

We run a range of support groups for foster carers including 'men who care', support groups for carers supporting children to move onto adoption, groups for connected person carers and Special Guardianship carers.

Independent advice

All foster carers are provided with membership to the Fostering Network where they are able to seek independent advice and support and access to information about fostering.

Foster Carers Association

The Foster Carers Association is run by Neath Port Talbot Foster carers who meet independently of the fostering service to provide mutual support to each other. They run a programme of activities for foster carers, looked after children and carers own children throughout the year. Members of the Association meet regularly with the managers of the fostering service.

Support for children and young people

Advocacy

All children who are looked after are provided to access to independent Advocacy

Education support and celebrating achievements

We have close links with the education coordinator for looked after children. It is an expectation that foster carers support children with their learning and education. We are members of the Letter Box Club which is a literacy and numeracy initiative funded by Welsh Government for children aged 7-13. Children receive parcels of books, numeracy games and stationary to stimulate their interest in learning.

We hold an annual event celebrating the achievements of our looked after children

Therapeutic service

We have a small therapeutic team which consists of a part time psychologist, Consultant social worker and play therapist. The team are able to work closely with foster carers, social workers and other key partners to provide support to help children develop secure attachments, and to reduce the risk of placement breakdown. The team develop the resilience of foster cares to meet children's emotional needs and where necessary can provide therapeutic support to children.

Planning and Reviews

All looked after children have a plan which is reviewed regularly by their independent reviewing officer. The plans include the personal outcomes for the child and how these will be met.

Consultation and engagement

Children and Young People Services has a participation and engagement team. The participation officer works closely with looked after young people to ensure that they are able to have a voice to tell us how they feel the service is run, and what improvements are needed.

The young people have established a youth council call YoVo (Your Voice) who meet regularly and are active in shaping the way services are run. They meet with the Corporate Parenting Panel and play an active role in activities within the Council including the recruitment of senior members of staff.

In addition the service has a Junior Safeguarding board which includes representatives from young people who are looked after.

Regulations

The Service operates in accordance with:

- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018
- The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering (Wales) Regulations 2010
- Delegated Authority for Foster Carers (Guidance 2011)
- Protecting Children supporting Foster Carers – dealing with allegations against foster carers Protocol (Guidance, 2011)
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016

Copies of the documents and the most recent CIW inspection of the Fostering Service are available on request

Useful Contacts

Welsh Government

Care Inspectorate Wales

Welsh Government office

Sarn Mynach

Llandudno Junction

LL31 9RZ

Telephone: 0300 7900 126

E-mail: CIW@gov.wales

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Oystermouth House

Phoenix Way

Llansamlet

Swansea

SA7 9FS

Telephone: 01792 765600

E-mail post@childcomwales.org.uk

For complaints about Neath Port Talbot fostering service please contact

Telephone: 01639 763394

E-mail: complaints@npt.gov.uk