



Foster Care Group Wales

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

April 2026



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CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Management Structure and Staffing**
- 3. Aims and Objectives**
- 4. Services provided**
- 5. Outcomes and Consultation with Children**
- 6. Recruitment, Assessment and Approval of Foster Parents**
- 7. Financial Support**
- 8. Training, Supervision and Review**
- 9. Referrals and Matching**
- 10. Quality Assurance**
- 11. Contact Details**

1. INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims, objectives and values of Foster Care Group Wales along with the facilities and services the agency provides. This document has been produced in accordance with the following regulations:

The Regulated Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2019
The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018
Regulations and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
The Regulated Services (Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2017
The Children Act 1989
The Children Act 2004
The Children and Young Persons Act 2008
Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

This document (is reviewed at least annually and if there are any changes made to the service) is provided and/or made available on request, to

- Employees
- Foster Parents
- Local Authorities
- Children and Young People
- Fostering Applicants
- The Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
- The General Public or other interested parties

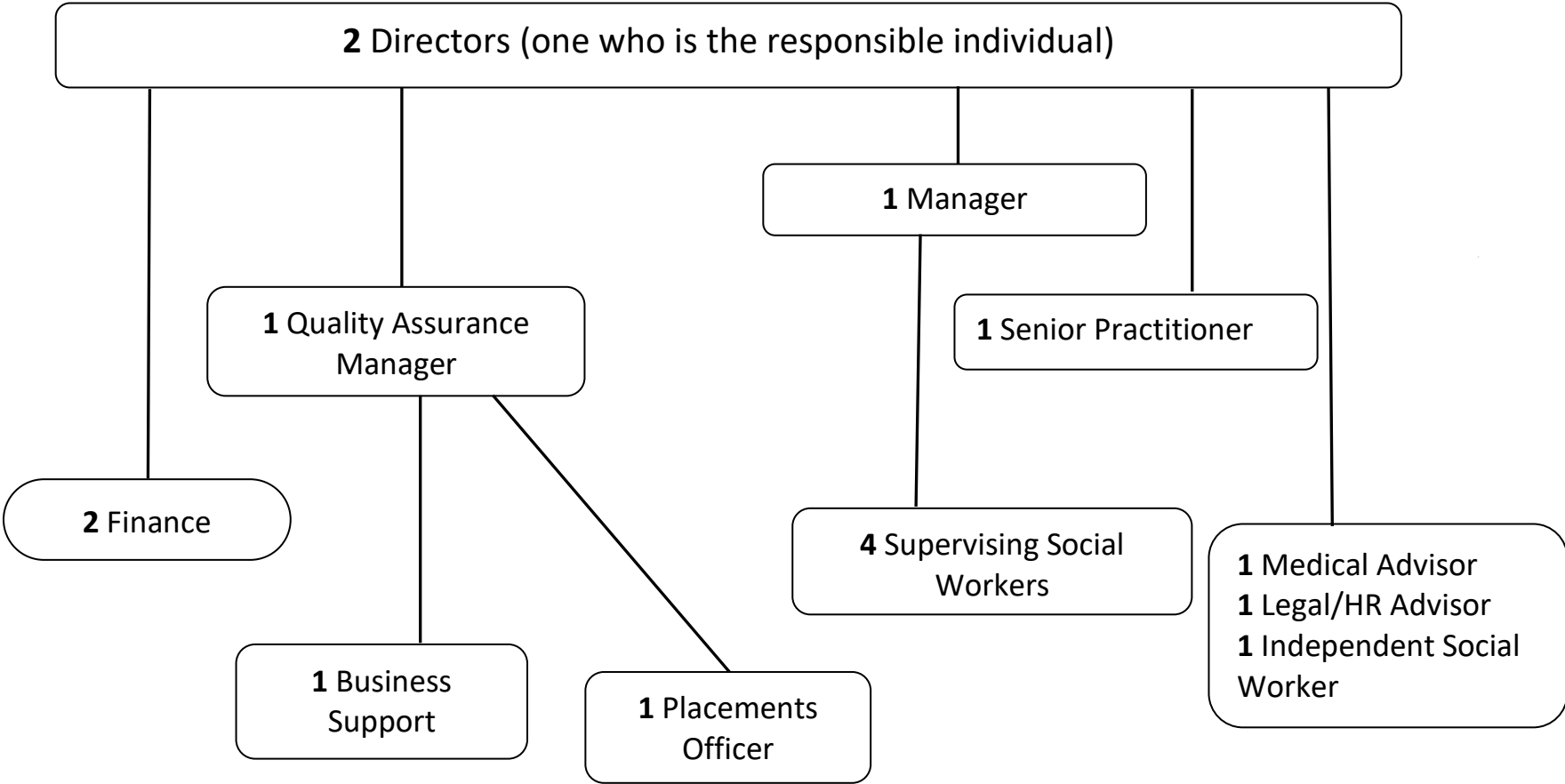
The statement of purpose is provided at each inspection to the relevant CIW inspector and is also published on the FCGW website.

Foster Care Group Wales is a private limited company based in Llanishen, Cardiff. The company is registered under the Companies Act 1985 (company No: 4078467) and is a registered Independent Fostering Agency with the Care Inspectorate Wales.

Foster Care Group Wales has two Directors; Mr Kevin O'Connor and Mrs Dawn French, who is also the Responsible Individual. The manager is Stefanie Whetton.

The agency provides a range of fostering services for children who are looked after across South/West Wales; Cardiff, RCT, Caerphilly, Merthyr, Vale of Glamorgan, Torfaen, Swansea, Newport, Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Ceredigion.

2. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND STAFFING



Foster Care Group Wales Staff

There are two Directors of Foster Care Group Wales (FCGW), each having a 50% share hold in the company. Mr Kevin O'Connor is the founder of Foster Care Group Wales. Mrs Dawn French is a shareholder and is the Registered Responsible Individual and Agency Decision Maker. Dawn attends at least three foster parent events a year, one of these includes a foster parent support group. Other events held give opportunity for Dawn to meet with the children/young people who are in placement with the agency foster parents. Dawn works from the agency office and is available to all staff members and offers supervision to the Agency Manager and Quality Assurance Manager. They meet with the Responsible Individual on a frequent basis to monitor service performance and to discuss and implement strategic plans for development. Dawn also attends bi-monthly management/business meetings at the agency premises.

Foster Care Group Wales aims to ensure that all staff have continuous and ongoing access to appropriate training opportunities to enable them to develop their skills and knowledge, which is a requirement of registration for social workers. All members of staff have monthly supervision and annual appraisals within which they discuss and identify their learning and development needs with their manager. A mixture of both in house and external training can be accessed as well as online training. Social workers are also encouraged to undertake training offered by our local authority partners if places are available for individual agencies. Individual training needs are tailored towards career development alongside any specialism that a social worker may be interested in developing.

A number of supervising social workers within the agency have also completed additional trauma informed training, including Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Theraplay and Enfys specific training. FCGW focus on a holistic model of care, with the aim of offering placements that can combine traditional high-quality nurturing care within a more therapeutic fostering approach.

Operational Managers

Stefanie Whetton is the Agency Manager for FCGW. Stef has worked for Foster Care Group Wales since 2009 and was supported by the agency to undertake her Social Work training through the Open University. Stef qualified with a BSc (Hons) in Social Work in 2012 and completed an ILM level 5 diploma in Management and Leadership.

Stef is responsible for all FCGW operational matters, foster parent and staff training for the agency and supervision of all social work staff.

Kayleigh Smith is the Quality Assurance Manager. Kayleigh has worked for Foster Care Group Wales since 2008 and was supported by the agency to undertake her Social Work training through the Open University. Kayleigh qualified with a BSc (Hons) in Social Work in 2016. Kayleigh is responsible for Quality Assurance across the agency, including running regular audits, identifying areas for ongoing development as well as initiating good practice incentives and facilitating training and workshops for both staff and foster parents. Kayleigh is also the agency Panel Advisor and supervises the administrative staff. Kayleigh supports Stefanie and works alongside the Senior Practitioner to offer management support out of hours and in Stefanie's absence. Kayleigh is working toward her ILM level 5 diploma in Management and Leadership.

Jane Parker is a Senior Practitioner at Foster Care Group Wales. She joined the agency in 2011 and has over 22 years' experience within the social work field having worked in a Local authority Looked after Children's team before commencing her employment with FCGW. She provides valuable support to Stefanie and works alongside the QA Manager to offer management support out of hours and deputise in Stefanie's absence.

Supervising Social Workers

Supervising Social Workers carry a small caseload of approved foster parents to whom they are responsible for providing support and supervision on a regular basis. They also complete assessments of foster parents, annual reviews, training for foster parents and regular consultation with the young people we provide care for.

Placements Officer

The agency's Placement Officer oversees all incoming referrals and undertakes the Individual Placement Matching process in collaboration with the social work team and management. They also provide general support to the social work and management teams in a variety of ways.

Business support/administrator

The agency's business support is responsible for providing overall administrative support to the whole team including supporting the Responsible Individual in relation to monitoring mandatory checks. They also oversee the administrative

processes for the agency panel, foster parent reviews and assessments, and financial elements such as foster parent payments and local authority invoicing.

Student Social Workers

Foster Care Group Wales has previously supported several student social workers. We provide a supportive learning environment valued by both the student and the universities. Managers and supervising social workers will also be supported to undertake training in becoming practice teachers, should the opportunity arise.

All staff demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional training and regularly access in-house and external training opportunities.

Foster Parents

We currently support fostering families with a wide range of skills and experiences across the South and West Wales region.

We have one main office as a base for staff located in Cardiff. Training and meeting facilities are available within our main office, in Cardiff. When there is a need to hold training or meetings for foster parents outside of this area, rooms are hired locally. This means we can deliver a local service, close to the communities of children and foster parents. The agency utilises an online recording system which enables Social Workers to communicate effortlessly wherever they are based.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

By placing quality care at the heart of everything we do, we enable the best possible outcomes for every child in our care.

Foster Care Group Wales aims to provide foster placements that ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for each child/young person placed, and that they receive quality care.

Our objective is to support, supervise and offer ongoing training opportunities to our foster parents so they can provide a comprehensive service addressing the physical, emotional, educational and social needs of the children and young people placed with them. By providing high quality, carefully matched placements, we aim to offer children of all ages a period of stability and security, focusing on positive outcomes that can be measured and evidenced.

FCGW employ policies, practices and procedures which always seek to;

- Ensure the provision of high-quality care to children and young people in a safe, healthy and nurturing family setting.
- Protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect exploitation and deprivation.
- Develop the child's sense of identity and self-worth.
- Meet the child's individual needs in accordance to their care plan.
- Achieve high-quality placement stability rates and positive outcomes for children and young people in all areas of their lives including health, education, family and social relationships, emotional wellbeing, identity, self-care and social presentation.
- Seek the views of children by regularly consulting with them and promoting participation.
- Recruit, assess and ensure that foster parents receive professional guidance and support to help them fulfil their roles as effectively as possible.
- Provide high quality, accessible training enabling carers to develop their skills and knowledge to provide highest quality placements and better meet the needs of children.
- Offer placements that carefully match the specific needs of the child to the foster parents' skills, experiences, and family lifestyle.
- Promote positive working relationships and good communication between the agency and local authorities to promote good practice for the benefit of children and young people.
- Maintain the skill level and knowledge base of staff, managers, and panel members by providing effective training and staff development programmes.

- Maintain secure and accurate records for children, foster parents, and staff that evidences the quality of the fostering agency and compliance with legislation and guidance.
- Ensure that the Foster Panel operates according to guidelines set by legislation and regulations in relation to foster parent approvals, reviews, allegations and complaints.

4. SERVICES PROVIDED

Our range of services is designed to provide safe, nurturing environments where children can thrive.

Foster Care Group Wales provide a wide range of placements for all children and young people aged 0-18 years, whatever their circumstances. Our foster parents have the knowledge, skills and experience to meet the needs of a broad range of placements.

- **Emergency Placements** (provided at short notice, including out of hours)
- **Short-term placements of any duration** (for a child whose long-term placement is still undecided)
- **Long-term placements/permanence** (care up to and into adult independence)
- **Sibling placements**
- **Parent and Child Placements** (family-based environment where parenting skills can be modelled, observed, and assessed in line with the placement agreement)
- **Short term breaks** (intensive short-term foster care to support families in crisis)
- **Solo placements** (for children and young people who are unable to be placed alongside other children)
- **Respite care/Support care** (one off or regular short stays away from main foster parent/s or birth family)
- **Placements for children with disabilities** (with carers who specifically have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of a child who has disabilities)
- **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**
- **When I'm Ready** (these placements can be negotiated with the placing authority to enable young people to remain in foster placement after the age of 18 to support their transition into adulthood).

5. OUTCOMES AND CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN

Consultation is not a step – it's the foundation for achieving the best outcomes for every child.

Foster Care Group Wales has adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the foundation for all our work with children and young people.

In Wales this is expressed in seven core aims:

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

The UNCRC states that children have the right to a voice and for their opinion to be heard and valued on matters that affect them (article 12). Foster Care Group Wales ensure that a number of opportunities are provided for the child's voice to be heard, and this ethos is embedded into our practice. We hold an annual child's consultation day to which all children and young people placed within the agency are invited. This is arranged and facilitated by the staff team and uses fun and creative activities to encourage children to express their opinions on a variety of subjects. The day also provides an opportunity for children and young people to meet and interact with their peers and to develop their own social networks within the agency. As there are a number of social events throughout the year, the aim is to promote feelings of inclusivity and a sense of belonging for all children, young people and foster parents who are part of Foster Care Group Wales.

An important part of promoting the voice of children and young people in the agency is the relationship that is built between supervising social workers and the children who are placed. The children and young people are formally consulted by the supervising social worker as part of the foster parent's annual review and throughout the year additional consultations are completed and recorded. Children are routinely

seen within foster parent's supervision visits and supervising social workers record their observations and discussions with the children. Where appropriate, supervising social workers are also encouraged to take the children out of the foster home to consult with them independently, including within school holidays or at times of difficulty within placement.

Alongside these events, consultation also takes place through questionnaires and online surveys that the children are encouraged to complete, to share their views and opinions on service development and their wider experience of being in foster care. Children's views are also pivotal to the annual review process. A young people's consultation group has been established and has the opportunity to meet 3 times per year to look at a range of service and practice development issues; the young people have named the group 'CIA' (Children Inform the Agency). The agency also put on children/ young people events three times a year where they are given the opportunity to discuss any issues with the agency manager/SSW.

Children are also encouraged by the supervising social worker and foster parents to attend their CLA reviews and any other meetings that directly affect them. Foster parents may be guided by their supervising social workers regarding the best way to prepare children for such meetings to enable them to participate to their fullest capacity.

When children move on from a foster placement, an 'End of Placement Reflection' form is completed to seek the views of the child, foster parents and local authority social worker. This is then analysed by the manager and placements officer to inform future placement matching for the family, identify any potential support needs and to continue developing services.

Outcomes for children are also Foster Care Group Wales' priority as part of the All Wales Fostering Framework. As a Framework Provider, Foster Care Group Wales undergo an Annual Quality Performance Assessment which is based on a 360* consultation approach, including seeking feedback from children and young people in placement. The Framework is an 'outcomes focussed' framework and as such the Annual Quality Performance Assessment seeks to acquire evidence of the agency's ability to promote positive outcomes for the children in our care and provide an analysis of how well the agency is performing at meeting these outcomes.

The outcomes identified within the framework, upon which the agency is evaluated, are categorised in the following way;

- Education
- Health emotional and behavioural
- Family and social

- Identity
- Social presentation
- Self-care
- Safeguarding

From the outset of undertaking an assessment of prospective foster parents the agency ensures that diversity and acceptance of difference is approached and explored fully. The Agency's Equal Opportunity Policy aims to develop and provide services on the basis of equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices, without prejudice to race, culture, gender, religion or disability.

Foster Care Group Wales aims to provide placements where there is a respect for and promotion of the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of children and young people. The pre-approval and post-approval training encourages care provision that respects the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background of children and young people who are looked after throughout our agency. Foster parents are provided with the necessary information, support and training to enable them to provide the best possible care and to promote the heritage of a fostered child or young person. The agency encourages foster parents to actively research the different cultures of children placed in their care.

We are committed to creating a fostering environment where every child, young person, and adult is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. This includes fully recognising and affirming each individual's gender identity, expression, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, faith, and personal history. We understand that identity is deeply personal and can evolve over time, and we ensure that our practice is inclusive, non-judgemental, and responsive to each person's needs. Our carers and staff are expected to champion equality, challenge discrimination, and provide a safe, supportive space where children and young people feel seen, valued, and empowered to be themselves.

6. RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL OF FOSTER PARENTS

We don't just recruit carers – we build families of compassion, strength and hope.

Recruitment

The majority of our foster parents have been recruited by word of mouth and recommendations from existing foster parents, social workers and staff. We also have a website which provides potential foster parents with information about fostering and the process of enquiry, assessment and available support to help them make informed choices about fostering for the agency.

Enquiries may be made via our website or by telephone. We recognise the diverse society and communities in which we live and work and always aim to embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity.

Initial enquiries made by the public will be dealt with by a member of the team and a 'Fostering Enquiry Form' will be completed. Preliminary basic information will be obtained e.g. location of caller, number of people in the household (adults and children), bedroom space, current working hours, any childcare experience, and where they heard about the agency.

All enquiries are then passed onto a manager in the agency who will contact the enquirer within 7 days of their initial enquiry to arrange a visit and discuss their interest further. A record is kept of all fostering enquiries received.

The agency actively promotes raising the profile of the Welsh language in accordance with the core values set out in the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014.

The practical measures which have taken place to incorporate the Welsh language into the culture of the Agency include;

- Providing opportunities for staff members to learn basic Welsh. Two members of staff were supported to attend a basic Welsh language skills course. In the recruitment of any new staff, the ability to communicate in Welsh is considered a desirable skill.
- Agency information is available in both English and Welsh.
- At initial assessment stage, the option of the assessment completed in Welsh is offered.

Assessment

Initial visits are undertaken by the Manager, or the Director in the prospective applicants' home. Information will be provided about fostering, the needs of children requiring homes and the services of the agency. The prospective foster parents' motivation will also be discussed. If deemed appropriate to progress further, an information pack and application form will be provided.

- Once the application form is received, a letter is sent to the applicant acknowledging receipt of the application and advising them that they will be contacted within 7 working days.
- A member of management will then undertake a thorough initial assessment at the applicant's home. This visit provides key information about the skills, experience and knowledge required to be a foster parent. A conversation will also take place about relevant checks (e.g. DBS, Health and Local Authority) as required.
- Once the initial assessment is completed, a recommendation by management will be made regarding suitability to progress to stage one checks.
- If the decision is made to progress, a supervising social worker will then be allocated. The applicant's written consent to all necessary checks is obtained at this stage to proceed with the assessment.
- All assessments are carried out by suitably qualified, supervised, registered social workers in accordance with the Regulated Fostering Services (Service providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) 2019. Assessments are ordinarily completed by social workers within the team. Foster Care Group Wales encourages prospective foster parents to meet with other agency carers for advice and guidance, and to attend training and workshops whilst being assessed.
- The Form F assessment is carried out through a series of face-to-face interviews and meetings with the applicants in their home. A comprehensive evidence-based assessment is completed of the prospective applicants, covering their motivation, capabilities, and individual skills. The suitability of the home, finances, feelings, and views involves all household members including applicants' children who may live away from home, as recommendations are made in terms of matching alongside the family.
- All applicants and adult members of the household are required to have enhanced level Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks, Local Authority checks (within the area they currently live and any areas they have lived over the previous 10 years), Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) checks and Medical checks to ensure their suitability to become approved foster parents.

- References will also be obtained from employers where applicants have worked with children or vulnerable adults. The agency will also seek at least two personal references from people who are able to comment on their suitability to become foster parents. The personal references are received in writing and followed up by an interview with the supervising social worker.
- Where an applicant has children with an ex-partner, references will be sought from the ex-partner in relation to their suitability to care for children as a foster parent. The agency is mindful of the possible sensitivities around this and will discuss with the applicants prior to sending for references.
- Applicants are required to attend Skills to Foster Training prior to completion of the assessment report and presentation to panel. The Skills to Foster Training provides an introduction to the role of a foster parent and the issues involved in caring for children who are looked after. Feedback from this training course is incorporated into the assessment.
- When foster parents transfer from another agency or local authority, the agency will follow the good practice protocol published by the Fostering Network regarding “transfer of carers” and ensure we work closely with the responsible local authorities to ensure that the care and needs of any children in placement are not to be disrupted during the transition. A written reference will also be requested and FCGW will ask permission to view the foster parent’s file.
- As required under the *Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2019* and the *Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016*, the assessment of prospective foster carers follows a two-stage process. Stage 1 involves completing all mandatory statutory checks and gathering essential information about the applicant and their household. These checks typically include but are not limited to: Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, local authority checks, medical assessments, personal references, and a health and safety assessment of the applicant’s home.
- Once Stage 1 checks are completed satisfactorily, applicants progress to Stage 2, where a full fostering assessment (Form F) is undertaken. Stage 2 focuses on a detailed assessment of the applicant’s suitability to foster, exploring their experiences, strengths, values, and capacity to meet the needs of children and young people. This stage involves a series of structured assessment sessions, home visits, and reflective discussions, culminating in a comprehensive Form F assessment report. Applicants are fully involved throughout the process and are given opportunities to contribute their views, review the information recorded, and understand how their skills align with the fostering role.

- A mid-point review is held with the applicants, assessing social worker and member of the management team to discuss the progress of the assessment, and any potential issues that may have arisen.
- Once the Form F report is completed and all checks are received, the assessment reports are presented to Foster Panel for a recommendation as to whether the applicants are suitable. The panel consists of a range of professionals and lay people who have an understanding of the foster parent's role. Applicants are invited to attend foster panel, alongside their assessing social worker. The process from application to panel should take no longer than 6 months.
- Foster Panel's recommendations regarding the suitability of the applicants are considered by the Agency Decision Maker within 7 working days. The Agency Decision Maker will then make a decision regarding the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster parents, taking full account of all panel member's recommendations into consideration when reaching their decision.

Representations/Independent Review Procedure

- If a decision is made at Fostering Panel or by the Agency Decision Maker to refuse the application, the applicants will be written to outlining the reasons for this decision and will be provided with information regarding their right to appeal. They will be advised that if they wish to challenge the decision, representations should be submitted to the Agency Manager/Director within 28 days of the written notice of the decision.
- Alternatively, a request for review of the decision can be made to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) within 28 days of the written notice and information will be provided on how to access the IRM. The IRM can also be activated at a later stage following review by the agency (see below).
- The only circumstances where the foster parent will not have the right to request a review by an Independent Review Panel is if they are regarded as disqualified as a result of a conviction or caution for a specific offence.
- If written representations or notification of a request for an independent review are not received within this period, the decision will be confirmed, and approval is withdrawn.

Post Approval

- Once approved, the foster parent will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will visit within one week of approval. All successful foster parents are provided with a certificate outlining the terms of their approval and a Foster

Care Agreement. They are also provided via CHARMS all of Foster Care Group Wales' agency policies and procedures, which includes all aspects of the fostering task and outlines expectations of both foster parents and the agency.

- A training and development plan is written with, and for, each foster parent and they are able to access the full training schedule of the agency from the time of their approval. This enables them to expand and build upon their skill set.

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

All Foster parents are paid a daily allowance for every child placed with them. Payments are made on the 28th day of the calendar month.

As of April 1st, 2026, foster parent payments are £66.50 per night, and respite allowance is paid as £2.75 per night.

A breakdown of allowances is explained in the financial policy, and also at the “Welcome to Fostering” induction visit post-approval.

8. TRAINING, SUPERVISION AND REVIEW

Training builds confidence, supervision provides guidance – together, they create better outcomes for children and young people.

Foster Care Group Wales offer a range of training and support to ensure that foster parents are well equipped to carry out their role. All foster parents are required to have an annual review which is an opportunity to reflect on the experience of fostering over the past year.

- All foster parents complete the Skills to Foster training during their assessment which prepares them for the role and covers areas such as working with professionals, safeguarding, managing behaviour and transitions.
- Post approval foster parents are offered a comprehensive training programme. Additionally, the agency runs regular workshops, invites guest speakers and provide presentations within support groups. Online training is also provided, and foster parents are often able to access local authority training if spaces are available.
- The foster parents are provided with the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to provide high quality care for each individual child placed. The training programme is run annually and is timetabled around school holidays. We also recognise that some foster parents develop skills through participation within their own work-related training and encourage and support this.
- All foster parents are required to complete mandatory training on the following topics: Safeguarding, First Aid, Allegations, Safer Care, Record Keeping & at least one course on the impact of trauma/PACE/therapeutic parenting. We also provide access to a range of individualised training opportunities as identified in discussion with foster parents.
- We supported our foster parents to complete the QCF Level 3 Award in Health and Social Care (Children and Young People). When the QCF became non-existent in September 2019, we introduced the National Fostering Framework for post-approval learning and development for foster parents.
- FCGW has an equal opportunities policy which applies to staff, foster parents, and young people. Training is mandatory for all staff and foster parents to assist them in understanding and valuing diversity. Applications to become a foster parent are welcomed, regardless of gender, marital status, sexuality, race, disability, religion, culture or employment status. As long as they can evidence

their potential ability to provide appropriate care to a child or young person all are encouraged.

Supervision/FCGW Social Worker's role:

Foster Care Group Wales values the work that foster parents undertake and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people in their care. We believe that *'the key to a successful placement is the quality of support that foster parents receive'*.

Foster Care Group Wales offer a comprehensive range of supervision and support to foster parents, including:

- Foster parents are provided with fortnightly supervision by an appropriately qualified supervising social worker. It is the social worker's role to ensure that foster parents receive the guidance, training and supervision needed to enable them to provide consistent, high-quality care for a child who is looked after (CLA) placed in their care.
- The supervising social worker (SSW) will support the foster parent when children are placed and endeavour to ensure essential CLA documentation is received.
- The SSW will ensure that the children in placement are seen at least quarterly and that the child's views are sought and clearly recorded.
- The SSW will give consideration to any help or support that household members may require.
- The SSW will work in partnership with other professionals and attend CLA reviews and any other meeting involving the child.
- The SSW gathers all information and completes a competency-based report to inform the annual review of foster parents' suitability to foster, in line with regulations.
- The SSW must inform their responsible line manager immediately of any complaints, issues or allegations.
- The SSW must make and record at least one unannounced visit per year.
- The SSW conducts an annual health and safety checklist inline with foster parents annual reviews.

- The SSW will work in accordance with FCGW policies and procedures and demonstrate an understanding of relevant legislation and good practice guidelines.

Support Out of Hours

Foster parents have access to a qualified supervising social worker 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to support them in meeting the tough demands of their role. Managers and the RI are also available out of office hours to support the staff and foster parents should a serious incident arise or if advice is needed.

Support Group Meetings

Foster parents have access to support groups that are facilitated by management. The Responsible Individual attends at least two of these meetings per annum. These groups provide peer-peer support and an opportunity for foster parents to share and exchange knowledge and advice. Often guest speakers are invited, or small workshops are run on topics relevant to the fostering role.

Foster Talk

FCGW provide membership to Foster Talk for every fostering household in the agency. Foster Talk also provides independent support and advice for foster parents, including those facing allegations and complaints. There are several other benefits to the Foster Talk membership, for example access to a range of publications, online training, advice and many financial benefits such as discounted prices for certain activities and services.

Reviews of Foster Parents

- Foster Care Group Wales has a robust system in place to ensure that foster parents are reviewed annually. Reviews will occur sooner following a significant incident or upon changes to a foster parent's circumstances or to the household, as per statutory requirements.
- Our review process focuses on evidence of the core competencies required to complete the fostering task, giving consideration to the continuing appropriateness of any terms of approval and also includes regular appraisal of

skills development and training. This is to ensure that the quality of care provided is the best it can be for the child.

- A full report is completed by the supervising social worker. Contributions from the child's social worker, any educational professional, and other professionals involved in the child's care plan as well as the children's views are sought and incorporated. The views of family members are also sought as are the views of foster parent's birth children if they reside in the household. The health and safety report, pet assessments, and relevant safer care policies are reviewed and updated in line with the review. Any other recorded feedback that has been provided within the review period, for example by other professionals, will also be incorporated into the review documentation. All recorded consultations with children that have taken place within the review period are considered, including for children who have since moved on. This may include 'End of Placement Reflections' or consultations that have taken place while the child was placed. Foster parents' own views are sought in preparation for the review, and they are encouraged to reflect on their own performance and development over the previous year.
- Review paperwork is then shared with the Registered Manager for approval.
- Foster parents have sight of the report completed by their supervising social worker prior to the review taking place and are given the opportunity to share their views.
- The review paperwork, with all additional evidence, is given to the reviewing officer who will conduct the review.
- Following the review, foster parents are provided with a copy of the annual review report completed by the reviewing officer and a letter outlining the outcome.
- The agency may only propose to amend a foster parents' terms of approval following a review in accordance with fostering regulations.
- In line with regulations, foster parents must have a review within their first year of fostering and this must be presented to the fostering panel. Reviews will also be presented to the panel if any significant events, including complaints or allegations, have occurred. As good practice and as a quality management measure, the agency also presents the reviews of foster parents to the fostering panel every three years post-approval.
- Annual reviews that are presented to fostering panel, are primarily completed by the agencies independent reviewing officer.

- Where a change of approval is proposed, the agency must issue a “qualifying determination” and provide details of the applicants’ right to appeal or access the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).
- The Responsible Individual reads every annual review.

9. REFERRALS AND MATCHING

The right match changes everything – because when a child is truly understood they can begin to flourish.

As a small agency, we can maintain excellent communication between the placements team, social work team, foster parents and local authorities.

We believe that the careful attention and effort put into the placement and matching process is integral to offering high-quality, stable placements within which children can meet their full potential.

In order to promote positive practice in this area we;

- Have dedicated placement officers who respond to all enquiries about placement choices and liaise closely with supervising social workers, foster parents and local authorities. This ensures the best possible match for the child and foster parents.
- Encourage the supervising social workers to discuss any foster parents who have been recently approved or come back on the vacancy board, ensuring that the placements team always have a thorough up-to-date knowledge of the matching criteria and personal circumstances of each family awaiting a placement. Within these discussions we can consider the needs of each member of the fostering household, including birth children and any children who are looked after in the home.
- Hold six weekly placement meetings with management and the placement officer to discuss any issues pertaining to current or future placements.
- Ensure that supervising social workers complete end of placement reflections with foster parents, offering opportunities to identify what has worked well, what challenges foster parents have faced and how these may affect future matching decisions. This information is then relayed to the placements team within the bi-monthly placement meeting.
- Devise photographic pen pictures of each of our foster families and their homes. These are sent alongside a comprehensive Individual Placement Matching (IPM) form to enable local authority social workers to have access to as much information as possible during the initial matching stages, including the ability to see the living and study space available to a child.

- When timescales allow, we arrange a pre-placement matching meeting. The placement officer, foster parent/s, LA Social Worker, LA Team Manager, current foster parent/s and agency manager attend these meetings. The meetings give all present the opportunity to ask any further questions, discuss transport arrangements, any potential barriers, and fundamentally find out more information about the child/children/s needs.
- Complete evidence based, personalised IPMs for each match, drawing upon information from a wide variety of sources and wherever possible, including feedback from local authority social workers and children who have previously been placed.
- Work with foster families to create personalised welcome books and letters for any child who has been successfully matched, allowing the child to have information about the home, family set-up and the interests and personalities of the people they are going to live with.
- Have devised further profiles to include pen-pictures for any child already living within a fostering family, to be used to inform the placements team, local authority and any children who are potentially matched with the family, ensuring that the children already within the home are given a voice within the matching process.
- Ensure that an FCGW social worker is always present at the time of a new placement in order to help facilitate the meeting, promote accurate and open sharing of information and support the foster parent in their role of settling the child into the home. Foster parents are provided with support and advice around the actual placement meeting on how to support the child during this difficult time.
- Ensure that all newly placed children are provided with a memory box and items to ensure that they can keep all of their cherished and important things safe. Younger children are also provided with their very own 'patch' teddy who 'writes' a letter to the child welcoming them to their new home and asking that they care for him/her.

Our aim is to ensure that each child is offered the very best chance at stability and in order to do this we are committed to constant development and learning. We meet regularly to ensure that we are constantly reflecting, analysing and evaluating not only the successes and challenges encountered by the children and young people in our care, but also the needs of the whole fostering sector and whether there is anything we can do to better meet these needs.

10. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Behind every number is a child, a story and a chance to do better.

The Quality Assurance Manager completes regular audits of all case files, recordings, and checks required of foster parents. The Agency Manager ensures that formal supervisions of the supervising social workers are completed and recorded. All quality assurance matters are discussed at management meetings and where applicable within staff supervision and agreed actions are recorded.

External Inspection

As a regulated Fostering Agency, Foster Care Group Wales is inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). A copy of our latest fostering inspection is available to the public via our website and via the website of CIW at www.ciw.gov.uk

Fostering Panel

As per regulations, Foster Care Group Wales hold regular Fostering Panels that are used as a quality assurance measure for the approval of new foster parents as well as for the review of existing foster parents. The panel are also available to offer advice and guidance on a wide range of issues, including specific cases or applications, as well as wider service delivery. Feedback on the quality of reports and information provided to the panel members is sought at every panel meeting and is used to inform practice. Panel members have access to learning and training opportunities. They have an annual appraisal completed by the Panel Advisor and Chair. In turn, the Chair's appraisal is completed by the Agency Decision Maker and the Panel Advisor. The appraisal focuses upon the ability for all panel members to develop their knowledge, experience and research in respect of updated legislation and fostering issues.

All Wales Fostering Framework

Foster Care Group Wales is an approved Framework Provider and as such are monitored and accountable under the conditions of the Framework contract. As Framework Service Purchasers, local authorities have the option to raise complaints, concerns and compliments with the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru. As part of the embedded contract management, the agency must provide information to the Consortium on service delivery and the quality of care provided is evaluated annually through the 360* degree Quality Performance Assessment.

Allegations or Concerns

Concerns about standards of care or allegations against foster parents are reported in accordance with FCGW Complaints & Compliments Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

The Manager oversees all cases where foster parents' conduct or issues around care are being investigated and ensures that all referrals are made to the appropriate local authority safeguarding officer.

Following conclusion of the investigation all cases are taken to panel in the form of a comprehensive report or review. Recommendation is then made by the social worker regarding re-approval and support. Any required training or development needs of the foster parent are identified. Recommendations made by the fostering panel will be considered by the ADM as to how to proceed. Should it be deemed that termination of approval is required, the need for a referral to the DBS will be considered by the registered manager, the safeguarding committee, and the Responsible Individual.

Representation and Complaints

Foster Care Group Wales place an emphasis on resolving any complaints and representations at a local level wherever possible. A copy of the complaints and compliments policy is available on request and is available to all the agency's foster parents via our CHARMS IT system. Details of the policy is contained in the children's guide. All complaints and allegations are fully investigated following the agency's policies and procedures.

The Agency Manager is responsible for ensuring that procedures are followed in accordance with guidance and legislation and that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. The Responsible Individual is made aware of any complaints and, where appropriate, this is then discussed in management meetings. Any outcomes or recommendations are carefully reviewed and any resulting practice or learning issues considered, in order to ensure ongoing development.

Any quality assurance issues arising from complaints and allegations are managed and reported to the Quality Assurance Manager, who also monitors the quality and effectiveness of FCGW complaints procedures.

All compliments received by the agency are recorded. Below are a few recently received comments that have been made about our staff, foster parents and the service that we offer:

'FCGW are always at the end of the phone for help when needed'

'I feel listened to and feel they are interested in what I have to say'

'Amazing support.. couldn't have asked for anymore help, they were all amazing!'

'FCGW offers good quality supervision and friendly staff'

'FCGW provide individualised support and understanding'

SSW - "I can always contact her when I need her, she goes above & beyond."

'FCGW is very supportive when needed. I can ring anytime and have support and help not only for my foster children but also for my own family'.

'Our SSW is great - professional, knowledgeable, helpful, approachable, responsive - couldn't ask for better'.

IRO feedback 'I want to thank them for the amazing work that they have done. It has not been easy for a number of reasons, but their love, care and dedication have allowed the children to grow and find permanency in their lives. Thanks so much!!!'

LA social worker – 'they continue to provide an exceptionally high standard of care, offering the children warmth, stability, and a nurturing environment in all aspects of their daily lives. Their commitment, reliability, and consistent child centred approach are evident in the children's progress and emotional security'

Quality of Care Report

Foster Care Group Wales reviews the quality of care provided by the agency as often as required, and at least every six months, in accordance with regulation 63 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. This Quality of Care Review is a comprehensive and robust document that plays a central role in assuring the effectiveness of our service. It draws upon extensive evidence gathered through consultation with foster parents, staff, young people, panel members and other professionals, ensuring that the review reflects the experiences and voices of all who use our service. Its findings not only inform and strengthen day-to-day practice but also provide essential verification of our Statement of Purpose, demonstrating how our commitments are being delivered in practice. An annual statement, including a summary of the Quality of Care Review is submitted to CIW, and relevant sections are made available to the public via their website, reinforcing transparency and accountability across the service.

11. USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Agency Contact Details

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Care Inspectorate Wales

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Rhyd-y-Car

Merthyr Tydfil

CF48 1UZ

www.ciw.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 062 8888

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Oystermouth House

Phoenix Way

Llansamlet

Swansea

SA7 9FS

01792765600

www.childcomwales.org.uk