

# WIRRAL FOSTERING SERVICE

## Statement of Purpose

June 2023

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose is a legislative requirement from the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011, consisting of the fostering services aims and objectives and the services and facilities provided. The Statement of Purpose also links with the children's guide which all children receive when they come into care (subject to age and understanding).

The Statement of Purpose is provided and made available to employees, carers, children, and young people in fostering placements, birth parents and to the public via the Wirral Council fostering recruitment website [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk) or in hard copy if requested via telephone 0151 666 4616. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide is kept under review and as a minimum is updated annually by the Fostering Service Management group.

## 2. LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Wirral fostering service are compliant with the principles stated in:

- The Children Act 1989.
- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- Every Child Matters 2004.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- The Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010.
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
- The Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulation Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Departmental Policies and Procedures, including the Placement Policy.

### 3. MISSION STATEMENT

We believe that children are best cared for in their own families. However, where this is not possible, we strive to ensure that children have an experience of family life where they are safe, nurtured and respected for as long as necessary and where all their needs, including their racial and cultural identity needs, are met. We accept that for some children the experience of family life is not appropriate because of the effects of past trauma. Every child should be able to experience a secure and happy family life being safely cared for by a loving adult or adults. We strive to achieve this through providing a responsive and effective service to individuals and families from all backgrounds involved in fostering.

### 4. VALUES

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have their wishes and feelings listened to and considered.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background to develop their identity, self-confidence, and self-worth.
- The needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and considered.
- The significance of family time for children looked after, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, halfsiblings, grandparents, and significant others, is recognised, and actively promoted.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity to have a full experience as possible of family life and childhood, without unnecessary restrictions. The central importance of the child's relationship with their Foster Carer should be acknowledged and Foster Carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- All fostering decisions must focus on the best interests of the child.
- Foster Carers have a right to full information about the child.
- It is essential that Foster Carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities to provide the best care for children.

- Partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes Central government, local government, other statutory agencies, Fostering Service provider and Foster Carers.

## 5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### Aims

- To provide a high-quality Fostering Service where all people are responded to promptly, treated respectfully and fairly, and given equal consideration regardless of ethnic background, age, marital status, religion, language, sexual orientation, and disability. The Department will take the necessary steps to ensure applicants have equal access, e.g., regarding physical access to buildings or religious/language differences. The Department aims to provide a comprehensive Fostering Service in co-operation with other teams and Departments, birth families and other customers to ensure there is a coherent local service to meet identified needs of children in the care of the Local Authority.
- To provide a comprehensive Fostering Service to meet the needs of children and birth families by recruiting sufficient numbers of in-house Foster Carers to meet the needs of the local community.
- To ensure that the needs, wishes and safety of the children looked after are at the centre of the fostering process and that the views of children looked after, their parents and carers are actively sought and listened to.
- To provide as far as is reasonably possible practical support and services which will enable the child to return to, or remain with, their family of origin, except in those circumstances where it is considered that it would be detrimental to the child's welfare, due to issues of significant harm.
- In making plans for the fostering placement for a child looked after, the department's first aims are to ensure:
  - a) The child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted throughout their placement.
  - b) That children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of the placement.
- To match children with approved Foster Carers who will ensure that their identity including racial and ethnicity, is promoted and family time with their birth family and significant others is maintained, and that there is minimum disruption to continuity of education and established social contacts and activities.
- To recruit suitably qualified and experienced people to deliver the Fostering Service who will provide services to ensure compliance with all required safety and safeguard checks.

- To ensure that the Fostering Service is resourced to meet the aims and that the premises from which the Fostering Service operates are fit for their purposes.
- To assess and, where appropriate, approve prospective Foster Carers within stipulated timescales.
- To provide a rigorous training and support programme in order that our carers can maintain and enhance their skills.
- The overarching aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, appropriate foster placements that meet or exceed the Fostering National Minimum Standards and ensure the best possible outcomes for the Children Looked After of Wirral.
- We are committed to continuous improvement and want to maximise our achievements in the areas that make the most difference to children, young people, and families.

## **Objectives**

We Our primary objectives in support of these aims are to:

- Ensure the provision of secure, safe, and consistent care to all children placed in foster care.
- Provide a positive experience of family life and a rich, enjoyable childhood to all children in foster care.
- Address and meet children's health, education, and social development needs, and equip them with as good or better skills to achieve in their development as a child living in their birth home.
- Targeted recruitment and streamline approval of Foster Carers to ensure that we are better able to meet the needs of our children looked after.
- Working together with children Social Workers and the children and young people Participation and Engagement service to develop and embed a continually improving understanding of children's needs in a fostering setting and throughout safeguarding services.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

We are committed to the principles of equal opportunity in employment and services. No individual, Employee, Foster Carer, or customers will be disadvantaged because of race, gender, disability, culture, age, sexual orientation, or any other reason. Discriminatory behaviour of any sort will be challenged and dealt with appropriately. Through our inclusive approach to recruitment, we aim to integrate equality of opportunity into all services and

activities.

Our service provision to Foster Carers, Children Looked After and young people reflect this culture of diversity, ensuring that our services, recruitment, and general business do not discriminate on any grounds of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race and ethnicity
- Religion and belief (or non-belief)
- Sexual orientation

Inclusive Foster Care Provision we seek to operate within a framework of fairness, openness, integrity, accountability and expect the same of those providing services for the authority, or on behalf of the authority. Our key values and principles are set down to ensure that:

All employment and service delivery policies and practices reflect a positive value for human difference and diversity.

All staff and Foster Carers are aware of and understand the authority's commitment to equality of opportunity and their responsibilities in relation to this.

Our workforce has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide high quality services within a clear framework of anti-discriminatory practice.

Our services are responsive, accessible, sensitive, and appropriate to those who need and may benefit from them.

Foster Carer pre- 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 through service. Foster Carers 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.

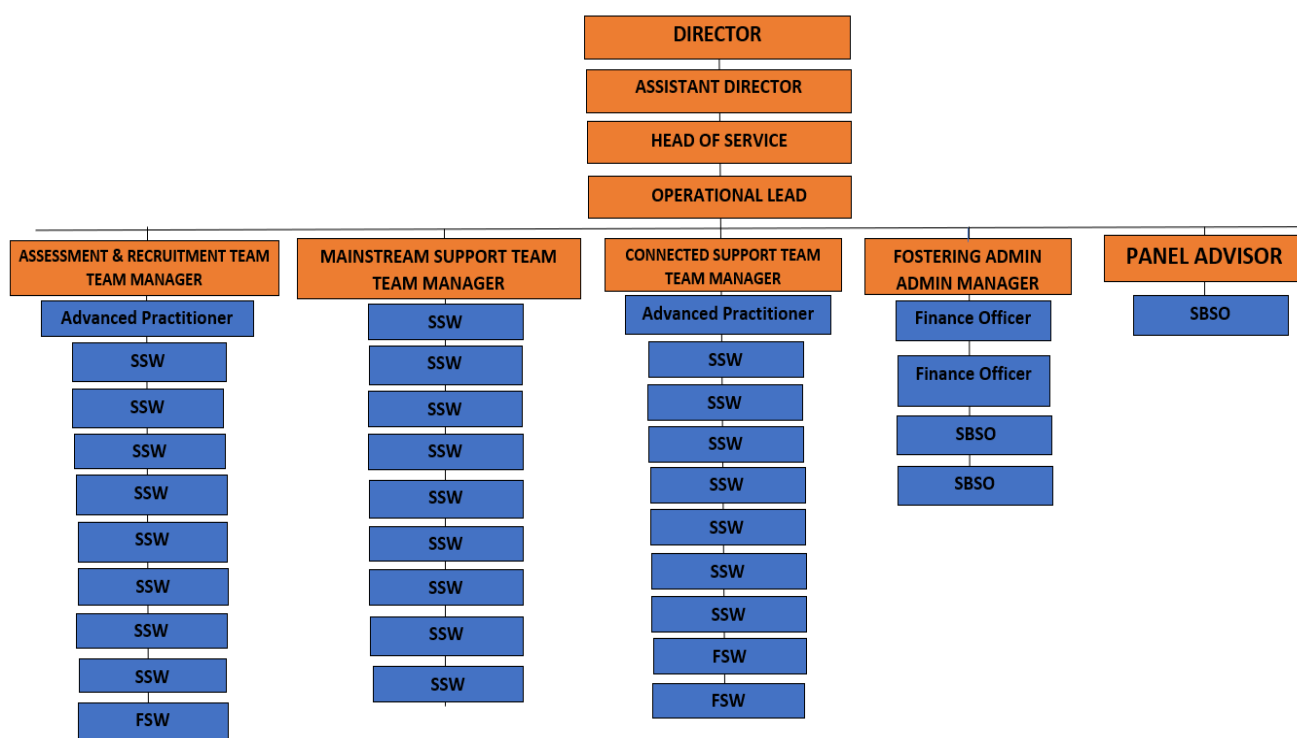
## 7. MANAGEMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE AND ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Simone White is the Corporate Director for Wirral Children’s Social Care and is responsible for the delivery of the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service as of the 1st April 2019 restructured into three dedicated teams:

- Recruitment and Assessment.
- Mainstream
- Connected

### Fostering Service Structure



Team managers are experienced qualified social workers and managers, with a wealth of experience within fostering. Managers have completed training and qualifications in leadership and management or in agreement or in the process of completing.

All social workers are qualified and registered with Social Work England and have a recognised Social Work qualification i.e. BA (hons); BSC (hons); DipSW; MA. All staff are provided with the necessary equipment to discharge their duties and the service operates a hybrid model of working from the office and home based.



## 8. FOSTERING PANEL

The Wirral fostering service is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and servicing the Wirral fostering panel. All panels are chaired by suitably qualified and experienced independent chairs. The panel membership is drawn from a central list of suitable vetted and knowledgeable individuals with the relevant expertise, to make effective child-centred recommendations. The purpose and functions of the Fostering panel is to make recommendations on the suitability of new prospective applicants and continued suitability of existing foster carers in respect of their terms of approval. The Fostering panel play a key role in improving standards within the fostering service. The panel advisor implements management and quality assurance frameworks, quality assures assessments to confirm panel ready, coordinates and agrees agendas for panel and advises panel members on statutory requirements to ensure compliance in carrying out its regulatory Functions. The panel make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.

### The Agency Decision Makers are:

Lynn Campbell – Head of Service, Head of Service Quality and Safeguarding  
 Charmaine Morris – Senior Practice Improvement Manager

## 9. PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, ASSESSING AND APPROVING PROSPECTIVE FOSTER CARERS

### Recruitment

- There is ongoing mainstream recruitment for Foster Carers who will be able to meet the needs of children in Wirral. There is targeted recruitment based on identified need i.e., specific age ranges, sibling groups, parent and child.
- Our Council website is in operation as part of the recruitment strategy to provide information and easy access to making an enquiry for prospective new Foster Carers.
- Prospective applicants can dial a recruitment line and expect a call back within 24hours; download information and an initial enquiry form from the website; email the department or attend information sessions held throughout the year.
- Initial visits will be undertaken within 10 days of the initial contact by a member of the fostering service.
- A dedicated team of recruitment personnel manage all enquiries for information about fostering in Wirral and send out information upon request.

### Assessment Stage 1

- If individuals want to proceed from their enquiry, they are asked to make a formal application and receive an initial home visit from a member of the Fostering

Service within 5 days unless advised otherwise.

- To speed up the process, references, medical reports, DBS checks and any other relevant information is concurrently sought by the Fostering Service.
- From the information received, the allocated worker will complete an initial assessment and where applicable is approved by the Team Manager.
- When initial assessments confirm applicants have the motivation and
- experience, together with the space and time to foster, they are asked to attend a Skills to foster training programme (preparation group), and the formal assessment will commence.
- Skills to Foster preparation training are run at least six times a year (for Mainstream and Connected Persons) and are run on different days of the week and times in the year to facilitate attendance.
- Prospective Foster Carers complete evaluation forms following attending Skills to Foster, and these are considered by the trainer and a Team Manager as part of ongoing service development. The trainer facilitating the course will produce a report on the interaction of the applicants during the preparation training which will inform their fostering assessment.
- Individuals can withdraw from the assessment at any point. If individuals are not considered suitable at stage 1, a letter confirming the outcome will reach them within 10 days of the decision being made. The applicants can access Wirral's complaints process if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

## **Assessment Stage 2**

- A comprehensive fostering assessment is undertaken using BAAF Form 'F' for mainstream, and BAAF Form 'C' for connected carers. All members of the household are seen individually as well as in a family group.
- Three personal references are sought, one of which can be a family member.
- Ex-partners are contacted for a reference unless there are significant safeguarding concerns, and the applicant would be in danger if the ex-partner was approached.
- Adult children who are not living within the home are also contacted.
- The Form 'F' or Form 'C' is shared with the applicant(s) to allow for factual corrections and observations on the report prior to being submitted to foster panel.
- The assessing Social Worker receives regular supervision throughout the assessment process.

- If at any time during Stage Two, there are concerns about the competence of participants, a brief report will be presented to foster panel. If the foster panel and the Agency Decision Manager confirm the individuals are unsuitable, the candidates have the right to make representations to the Foster Panel or to the Independent Review Mechanism.

## Approval

- The assessing Social Worker prepares the applicant(s) for attending the Wirral
- Fostering Panel. An information sheet is provided explaining the role of the panel.
- The assessment report, together with any written observations or representations, is submitted by the assessing Social Worker to the panel.
- The panel's recommendations are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker to make the final decision. The performance standard here is to make the decision within 7 working days of the panel.
- The decision is sent to the Foster Carer(s) within 7 working days of it being made.
- If the Agency Decision Maker does not agree for the applicants to be approved, they are notified in writing. They will then have 28 days to make representations to the panel or use the Independent Review Mechanism.

## Timescales

A full assessment should be undertaken which allows the panel to make their recommendation within 16 weeks of the applicant's initial inquiry.

## 10. SERVICES PROVIDED

The fostering service recruit, assess and approve foster carers to offer foster placements to children aged 0 to 18 years of age. It is acknowledged that children are best placed in the care of their families; therefore, family and friends are always explored in the first instance and if required, are assessed as connected carers. The impact of trauma and loss when children are separated from their birth families is fully recognised and a range of carers with appropriate skill sets are recruited and supported to fully meet children's assessed individual needs, and to achieve good outcomes.

All foster carers receive financial support, a weekly fostering allowance and fee is paid fortnightly by BACS. The allowance is based on age of children and the fee is based on a skills level scheme. Foster Carers have opportunities to develop in specific areas of interest and further become specialised in certain subject matters specific to children through completing training course. Skill levels offer foster carers a framework for development and progression in their role. Each skill level is valued, recognised, and offers children choice when being consulted about their future care experiences and options. Foster Carers

will be paid according to skill level that they choose to attain, with the expectation for individuals to maintain skill levels through ongoing training and caring for children. Foster Carers, with support from their supervising social worker, will be expected to maintain and provide evidence of continuous development.

The premise of this approach is to reinforce the professionalism of Foster Carers, opportunities to continually develop within their professional role, leading to recognition of specific skills, knowledge, and expertise, in addition to fulfilling the foster care agreement (see Appendix A). Foster carers having a varying degree of specialist skills and knowledge enables the Fostering Service to achieve a strength-based approach during the matching process, ensuring children's individual needs can be fully met.

### **Types of fostering provided:**

#### **Short Term**

Caring for a child until they can return to their birth family or moving onto alternative long term care arrangement. The duration of short term care is dependent on individual circumstances and can be from an overnight stay, a few days, several months.

#### **Long Term**

When it is not possible for children to return to their birth family for a significant period, long term care arrangements are required to provide children with security and consistency of care until adulthood or before depending on individual circumstances.

#### **Parent and Child**

Parent and child foster carers provide parents either jointly or separately with support to parent their child (sometimes more than one); through positive role modelling, providing a safe and nurturing environment, empowering parents to establish routines, enhance parenting skills in a safe and protected environment, to meet their children's individual needs.

#### **Respite**

Caring for a child for a specific period, i.e., a few days, weekend, during school holidays to support birth families or existing foster carers. We are supportive of child focused practice and require respite is taken in line with the child's care plan and agreed by the child's Social Worker.

#### **Short breaks**

Short breaks for children with disabilities to support families. Birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and educational needs and main carers for their child. Children accessing short breaks do not have children looked after status.

## 11. SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS

Following approval, all Foster Carers will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who supports and supervises them through either the mainstream or connected carer team. The Supervising social worker support includes:

- Regular contact via telephone and home visits to foster carers.
- Ongoing supervision to support and identify areas of need and support to promote and progress children's plans.
- A supervisory form will be completed upon every Foster Carer supervisory visit by the Supervising Social Worker to ensure Fostering Standards are being met. 6 weekly supervisory visits will be completed with Foster Carers unless a long-term plan has been ratified for a child/ren placed with Foster Carers for supervisory visits to be completed 12 weekly. Foster Carers who do not have a child/ren placed with themselves on a permanent basis 12 weekly visits will be completed.
- As part of supervisory duties to support good outcomes for children, Supervising Social Workers will see and undertake direct work with children placed with foster carers, at a minimum of every 12 weeks if children's plans are ratified as long term fostering.
- Supervising social workers will complete a minimum of one unannounced visit annually with foster carers as legally required. Supervising Social Worker will record the pro-forma indicating the unannounced nature of the visit. This visit will be completed to all Foster Carers irrespective of children being placed.
- The Supervising Social Worker supports the Foster Carer by providing information on the departments policies and procedures, relevant legislation, and resources within and partner agencies.
- Identify and jointly agree personal development plans that include mandatory training and identified areas of development specific to children in their care. A comprehensive personal development plan (PDP) will be developed for all foster carers and reviewed during every supervision session.
- The Supervising Social Worker will ensure that the views of the Foster Carer are heard in relation to care planning for children in their care, they will endeavour to attend all meetings for children alongside the foster carer.
- The Supervising Social Worker monitors safeguarding including assessments, safety checks and processes, ensuring they are current in the best interests of children and all household members.
- The Supervising Social Worker will support the carer in their work, including the impact of fostering on the wider family.
- The Supervising Social Worker ensures that the Foster Carers meets all the standards of care and is responsible for assisting the carer in the development of

their competencies and their career as carers.

- The Supervising Social Worker reinforces the working partnership with the child's Social Worker, Foster Carer, and all other professionals.

### **Additional support**

- Independent support is offered in the event carers face safeguarding concerns.
- Specialist therapeutic support to children and their Foster Carers through CAMHS Tier 2, 3 and 4 services.
- Dedicated Education and Health support.
- Mandatory training courses.
- Access to a varied training programme to enhance skills and meet training requirements.
- Support to achieve Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards workbook.
- Foster carer Handbook.

### **Foster Carer Review**

All Foster Carers have an annual review which is an opportunity to appraise the last year of their Foster Care and set new goals and action for the year ahead. Training needs are reviewed, and new areas of development are identified. In addition, foster carers feedback is essential for ongoing service delivery and areas of development.

We have a well-established learning culture therefore every 5 years Foster Carers will be invited to attend fostering panel for their annual review. However, if any concerns do arise about a Foster Carer's commitment to on-going development this is addressed with them and where necessary this can include returning to foster panel to review their registration.

### **Policies and Procedures**

All Foster Carers are provided with links to and copies of current policies, procedures and information on Fostering Law, Complaints Procedures, access to records, Child Protection, support, health issues, health and safety matters, education information, managing behaviour and various other subjects relevant to Foster Carers and the task of caring for a young person.

These documents are reviewed regularly, and updates are issued as required to Foster Carers and staff. Policies and procedures can also be accessed via the Foster carer handbook.

### **Foster Carer Support Groups**

Are run on a regular basis. These are groups where information can be shared, any issues can be raised with the authority and most importantly carers can socialise together, learn from, and support each other.

### **Support for Foster Carers' Own Children**

We are committed to birth children's involvement within the service as they are an essential element to securing a positive family experience for children in care. Social Workers ensure they meet with birth children on a regular basis.

### **Family Mentors**

Family Mentoring is a support service that is short term and time limited. The service is a preventative model whereby foster carers are allocated to families in crisis with a view to avoiding children coming into carer, to support with children and family's reunification, and supporting care leavers at risk.

### **Peer Mentors**

Peer Mentoring is an additional support to foster carers supervising social worker and the overall service support. Peer mentors are experienced foster carers, offering support to newly approved and less experienced foster carers, from a position of understanding as foster carers themselves.

### **Day Care**

Foster carers offer support to other foster carers through providing day care and child minding.

## **12. STAYING PUT**

A Staying Put arrangement is where a former relevant child, after ceasing to be looked after, remains in the former foster home where they were placed immediately before they ceased to be Looked After, beyond the age of 18.

The intention of Staying Put arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition equal to their peers, avoiding social exclusion and being more vulnerable to subsequent housing and tenancy issues. The young person will continue to receive support under their care leaver status and work in partnership with their Personal Advisor (PA).

The former foster carer no longer acts in the capacity of Foster Carer for the young adult and the foster placement becomes a 'Staying Put Arrangement' and is not governed by Fostering Services Regulations. The 'former Foster Carer' offering a staying put arrangement may continue to care for children who are looked after. The young person living in the household under a staying put arrangement will require a DBS check as they are recorded as a member of the fostering household.

### **13. QUALITY STANDARDS**

- To comply fully with all relevant Childcare Legislation, Fostering Regulations and Minimum Standards for England.
- Every effort will be made to match children with families that reflect their religious and cultural needs. All children and young people are unique and as a result approved Foster Carers have a wealth of experience, and many specialise in areas in order to meet the individual needs of children who come into care. We have dedicated duty workers who respond to all enquiries about placement choices and liaise closely with Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers and allocated Social Workers. This ensures the best possible match for the child and the Foster Carers.
- Safeguarding children is priority, issues around child protection will be dealt with immediately, in line with policy and procedures.
- School attendance and academic achievement will be promoted for all children and young people, in line with Department for Education and skills guidance. We have a dedicated education department who give priority to ensuring that children receive full-time education appropriate to their needs. We do this while recognising that Children Looked After having been shown to be disadvantaged in their education and within the framework of government guidance on the education of children in public care. Carers and their Supervising Social Workers build up close working relationships with their local schools to ensure that children placed receive the most effective service. This will be reviewed in Children Looked After reviews and fostering supervisions.
- Support regarding liaison of all educational needs including admittance into schools, education training for Foster Carers, advice, and guidance for 16 plus for transition to University/Further Education/apprenticeship.
- Written records on each child or young person will be provided by Foster Carers. Foster Carers maintain an individual daily log on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress.
- Corporal punishment will NOT be used in any circumstances. Guidance will be provided on the use of age appropriate behaviour management and a written record kept of any implementation maintain by foster carer.
- The fostering service, including foster carers will maintain vigilance around



confidentiality and protecting children's personal information.

- Assessments will be completed by qualified and experienced staff with active participation by applicants.
- All Foster Carers will complete Skills to Foster training.
- Foster Carers will have continuing training in line with the DfE training, support, and development plans.
- We shall ensure each Foster Carer and foster home fulfils all health and safety requirements, is risk assessed and has a safe caring plan.
- Foster Carers work to an agreed individual child and young person's care plan and within the terms of the Placement Agreement.
- Foster Carers will promote family time with the children's families and significant others unless this is not possible due to safeguarding factors.
- Foster Carers will receive regular support visits from Supervising Social Workers and regular telephone contact.
- Foster Carers will have an annual review.

#### **14. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- The Team Managers are responsible for ensuring the supervision of all staff in the Fostering Team. All staff are seen and receive monthly supervision. Supervision and line management practice follows Policy and Management Standards.
- Team Managers are provided with supervision by the Head of Service.
- Team Managers complete monthly file audits for the purpose of compliance and safeguarding.
- Foster Carers maintain an individual daily log on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. Recordings are shared with foster carers supervising social workers and children's social workers.
- The Fostering Panel provides a quality assurance function which is exercised through individual recommendations on cases presented and recorded in the Panel Minutes and Panel Decision Sheet, together with advice from medical, legal and other relevant advisors to Panel.
- Monthly reports are produced by Team Managers and inform monthly reports to the Assistant Director regarding the current activity of the Fostering Service.
- Annual report on fostering activity is produced and submitted to the Assistant

Director and the Safeguarding board annually.

- In line with requirements, the Fostering Service will be inspected by Inspectors appointed by Ofsted.
- All Foster Carers are supervised and supported by an allocated Supervising Social Worker, annually reviewed which includes foster children contribute through their views. The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel. All other reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker unless concerns, issues or allegations are raised and require a return to the Fostering Panel for consideration.
- Carers are sent questionnaires independent of their reviews as part of the on-going consultation process to ensure the service is effective and responsive.
- Wirral has a bespoke database called Liquid Logic, allowing data to be recorded, monitored, and shared in a secure format.

## **15. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

All carers and applicants are provided with a copy of the Department's Complaints Procedure, 'Getting it Right' if they feel they have been treated unfairly. However, we endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants in the first instance. All children are provided with the children's guide which contains information about their right to make a complaint and the various ways to do so.

Applicants who have completed Stage One of the Assessment but are subsequently not considered suitable to continue with being assessed as Foster Carers may access the complaints process.

If complainants feel we have not addressed their complaint, they are informed of their right to complain further to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.

## **16. CONTACT DETAILS**

Fostering Service  
Wirral Borough Council  
The Rock Ferry Centre  
257 Old Chester Road  
Rock Ferry  
Wirral CH42 3TD  
Phone: 0151 666 4616

Email: [fosteringadmin@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringadmin@wirral.gov.uk)

Further information can be accessed on our website: [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk)

## **17. APPENDIX - Foster carer Agreement**

### **Wirral Fostering Services**

Approved Foster Carers and the Fostering Agency are legally obliged to sign a Foster Care Agreement and as partners abide by its conditions – National Minimum Standards Fostering Regulations 2011 – Schedule 5 Regulation 27(5) (b).

The purpose is to provide written information about the Terms and Conditions of the partnership between the Authority and its Foster Carers and further important information.

### **Foster Care Agreement**

Name of Foster Carer/s

Registration Details

Date of Approval

### **Foster Carers agree:**

1. That I/we will strive to treat any child(ren) placed with me as an equal and valued individual in their own right and to promote their welfare having regard to the Every Child Matters Agenda and National Minimum Standards/Fostering Service Regulations 2011.
2. That I/we will attend reviews, case conferences, planning and other meetings concerning the child/ren in my/our care and give my/our views clearly. I/we will provide a written report for the meeting.
3. That I/we will receive a copy of the written placement agreement(s) drawn up between the agency, myself/ourselves and, where appropriate, the child(ren) and his/her/their parents and will work with all parties towards the goals identified and keep this information confidential. I will return all information regarding the child(ren) to the Child's Social Worker at the end of the foster placement.
4. That I/we will inform the agency immediately if a new member joins the Foster Carer household, and that I/we understand that a Disclosure and Barring Service Check and child protection check must be undertaken for all household members and regular visitors aged 18 years and over.
5. That I/we will not offer my/our services as a carer to another agency without the consent of this approving agency. That I/we will not apply to adopt or apply to register as a childminder(s) without prior notice to the agency.

6. That I/we will have a Supervising Social Worker with whom I/we will maintain open communication and from whom I/we will receive supervision, advice and support. I/we will inform him/her immediately of any changes in household composition, change of address, illness or any other significant events which may affect the fostering household.
7. That I/we will receive from my/our Supervising Social Worker four Supervisory Home Visits (one unannounced) within any 12 month period, and that I/we undertake to retain written records of these visits.
8. That I/we have received details of the agency's Representations and Complaints procedures and understand that these can be used to deal with any disagreement or dissatisfaction.
9. That I/we will attend relevant training courses in line with my/our Personal Development Plan and TSDS requirements to further develop my/our fostering skills. That I/we undertake to access other forms of support made available by the agency, including required attendance at foster carer support groups.
10. That I/we will maintain appropriate household contents, buildings, and motor insurance and inform my/our insurers of my/our approval as a foster carer(s). I/we understand and accept the agency's provision of household and other insurance cover as detailed in separate departmental procedures and documentation.
11. That I/we will arrange for any child/ren to receive medical attention whenever s/he is ill and allow him/her to be examined at such times and places as the agency requires, e.g. dentists, opticians, medical checks etc.
12. That I/we will ensure that all children placed with me/us are encouraged to practise their religion if they and their parents wish and will advise the agency of any difficulties in achieving this.
13. That I/we will encourage and enable a child(ren)/young person(s), when needed, to understand their ethnicity, cultural background and family history. That I/we will use training and advice offered by the agency to enable this to be done and will advise the agency of any difficulties regarding this.
14. That I/we will promote and support contact between a child(ren)/young person(s) and his/her/their family unless stipulated otherwise in the placement agreement.
15. That the welfare of the foster child is paramount. I/we will be positively committed to the best interests of a child/young person in my/our care and be an advocate for that purpose at all times. I/we am committed to using my/our skills to enable the agreed aims of a placement to be achieved and completed.
16. That I/we will be responsible on a day-to-day basis for encouraging the child(ren)/young person(s) to attend school/college/work, support a child's Personal Education Plan, and will maintain contact regarding progress at school and attend meetings at/with school where appropriate.

17. That I/we will allow social workers to have access to the child(ren) in my/our care at all reasonable times and for the child(ren) to be seen alone when requested. I/we will allow any agency authorised person to visit my/our home to see the child if approved by the Child's Social Worker.
18. That I/we will keep the agency informed about the child(ren)'s progress and notify them immediately of any serious illness of the child(ren) or any other significant events affecting the child(ren).
19. That I/we will communicate with the child(ren)'s Social Worker and my/our SSW, particularly if things are not going well with the child(ren). I/we will try to avoid the situation reaching crisis point without warning by discussing matters openly at an early stage.
20. That I/we must allow the agency to remove the child(ren) if they decide to do so.
21. That I/we will not terminate a placement without prior discussion or reasonable notice being given. If I/we do not give reasonable notice of termination, my/our approval and registration may be reviewed.
22. That I/we will inform the agency immediately if any child in placement runs away or is taken away from the foster home without agency authorisation.
23. That I/we will inform the agency if the police are involved with any child(ren) in my/our care.
24. That I/we agree to keep a record of the child(ren)'s life while placed with me. I recognise the importance of photographs and other mementos for children leaving my care.
25. That I/we will undertake to maintain the child(ren)'s clothing from the clothing allowance received and that any clothes purchased will be the property of the child concerned, will be transferred with the child(ren) on leaving the foster family.
26. I/we am/are aware of the agency's policy and guidance on dogs in foster homes and will advise my/our SSW if I/we obtain a dog, or any other pet that may potentially present a risk to a child/young person.
27. That I/we will have due regard to health and safety in the home and will advise my/our SSW if this is compromised in any way. I/we will also inform my/our SSW if I/we require any equipment, financial assistance or advice to promote the maintenance of a safe environment for children/young people.
28. That I/we will produce and maintain a safe care plan for my/our household.
29. That I/we understand and agree to adhere to agency fostering policy regarding smokers and smoking.
30. That I/we understand and agree to the agency's policy of no physical chastisement of children/young people looked after and will not use corporal

punishment or any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable.

31. That I/we understand and agree to the agency's policy and procedures on safeguarding.
32. That I/we understand and agree to the agency's policy and procedures on investigating complaints and allegations involving foster carers.
33. That I/we am aware I/we need to request permission from the agency to take a child(ren) out of the country.
34. That I/we will co-operate as reasonably required with regulatory bodies and fostering service inspections, facilitating interviews with responsible persons and allowing visits to the foster home if required.
35. That I/we will repay any overpayment of fostering fees and maintenance payments.
36. That I/we accept that this agreement may be terminated by either party at any time giving the other 28 days' notice in writing as per agency policy.

### **USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Integrated Front Door: 606 2008 Option 2

Emergency Duty Team: 677 6557

Wirral Fostering Service: 666 4616

Ofsted: 0300 123 1231

All policies and procedures in relation to Children's Services can be accessed via the Wirral Council website.

### **Wirral Fostering Service agrees:**

1. That Foster Carers will be provided with a summary of the regulations that apply to fostering, and a Foster Carer Handbook of information which the agency undertakes to update at regular intervals.
2. That Foster Carers are members of the care team for children placed with them and will be expected to attend reviews and planning meetings concerning children in their care. A written summary of the meeting and its decisions as these relate to themselves and/or a child/ren will be given to the Foster Carers within 21 days. The Foster Carer's opinions and views will be given the same value and respect as any other professional in the team. In arranging meetings and appointments with

other professionals, eg health and education, reasonable care will be taken to fit these into the lifestyle of the Foster Carers and their household.

3. That a child will have been fully examined by a doctor or consultant within the three months prior to placement with the Foster Carers. The implications of any illness or developmental issues will be fully explained to them. If a child is unknown to the agency prior to placement, a full developmental medical will take place within 14 days of placement.
4. That Foster Carers will be provided with written information about the child, their family background and history, educational and medical information plus any other information relevant to the placement. Information will be supplied at the time of placement, or for children previously unknown to the agency, within five working days. This information will be kept up- to-date and any facts affecting placements of children will be communicated immediately to Foster Carers.
5. That at the time, or prior to each placement, a written placement agreement will be drawn up in consultation with the Foster Carers, child, parents and agency which includes the length of placement, contact arrangements etc. Where a placement is made at short notice, the agreement must be completed within five working days of the start of the placement. This will be reviewed within four weeks of being looked after by the Local Authority and thereafter at intervals of not more than six months.
6. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with their own Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who will provide supervision, support and advice. If their SSW is not available, foster carers should contact the relevant Team Manager.
7. That foster carers are provided with insurance cover by the agency.
8. That carers will be made aware of, and have access to, the Department's Representation and Complaints procedures.
9. That a review of the Foster Carer(s) will take place within one year of approval and registration and thereafter every 12 months. The Foster Carer review will include the views of the child(ren)/young person(s) and will provide an opportunity for both the Foster Carer(s) and the agency to consider how each has helped to provide services for children in their care and what, if anything, needs to change in order to improve these services. The review will also consider if TSDS requirements are being met. A copy of the review report will be given to, and retained by, the foster carer.
10. That the Supervising Social Worker will, within a 12 month period, undertake four Supervisory Home Visits (including 1 unannounced) with the Foster Carer(s). Each visit will be recorded; a copy will be retained by the Foster Carer(s).
11. That information held by the agency in relation to Foster Carers is available to them and also to departmental staff and other professional agencies (eg Education, Health, Cafcass, Police) in connection with the placement of children.
12. That Foster Carers can expect to be kept fully informed of all facts affecting

placements and expectations of the agency regarding the care of the child(ren)/young person(s) and the facilities, procedures and support available to them.

13. That, prior to a Foster Carer(s) approval the agency has undertaken to provide an appropriate preparation course. That following approval the agency will provide support groups and a range of mandatory and other training opportunities on a continuing basis in line with TSDS requirements. Mandatory training, other training courses will be made available via the agency's published foster carer training strategy.
14. That a Social Worker should be allocated for every child placed with carers and that any changes will be notified. That any child will be visited and seen in the foster home by a Social Worker within one week of placement and then at least six weekly during the first year of the placement. Thereafter, visits will be at no less than three monthly intervals. At other times, the child should be visited whenever a reasonable request is made, either by the child, Social Worker or Foster Carer.
15. That no placement will be terminated by the Foster Carer(s) or the agency without prior discussion or reasonable notice being given on either side, except in circumstances where safeguarding issues arise. That where a placement ends prematurely, a meeting will be called to review the implications for the child(ren), foster carer(s) and for the department.
16. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with procedures, guidance and advice on safeguarding.
17. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with procedures, guidance and advice on investigating complaints and allegations against foster carers.
18. That the agency will provide Foster Carers with procedures and guidance on children/young people looked after and missing from care.
19. That the agency will be open and honest in dealing with Foster Carers and provide them with all available information to enable a child's needs to be met.
20. That in an emergency, where the child's Social Worker cannot be contacted, the Team Manager or Fostering Team Manager should be contacted. For emergencies out of office hours, contact should be made with the Emergency Duty Team on 677 6557.
21. That this agreement may be terminated by either party giving 28 days' notice. If the agency terminates the agreement, Foster Carers may challenge this decision via the Representations or Complaints procedures.



