

Section 2 – You the foster carer

Your approval status has now been agreed and ratified by our agency decision maker within Caerphilly. This will confirm the number, gender and specific matching criteria of the child(ren) who will be placed with you. It will also include whether you are approved as respite, short-term or long-term foster carers.

2.1 Foster carer responsibilities

Within your role as a foster carer there are a number of tasks you will need to undertake. There are 4 main tasks which we group under the broader headings of:

**‘Caring for Children and Young People’,
‘Providing a Safe and Caring Environment’,
‘Working as Part of a Team’ and
‘Foster Carers own Development’**

- **Caring for Children and Young People**

We need our foster carers to provide a good standard of care to other people’s children and have an understanding of what it means and how it could affect a child to be removed from their birth parents. We expect our foster carers to promote healthy growth and development of children in their care including emotional, physical, sexual and educational. This includes working closely with professionals from health, school, social services etc. when a child is experiencing issues in placement or in school.

We see it as important for foster carers to encourage children to have a positive understanding of their origins, religion and culture so that they are given opportunities to develop their own sense of identity. We also ask our foster carers to assist and support a child to maintain positive relationships with individuals who are significant to them and work positively with a child and all involved when a child moves on from your care.

- **Providing a Safe and Caring Environment**

Carers need to have an ability to ensure that a child or young person is kept safe from harm or abuse. This involves helping the children to develop skills and strategies to keep themselves safe from harm and abuse and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.

It is important for carers to promote the secure attachment of children to adults and that where appropriate and necessary, they act as an advocate for a child to ensure their voice is heard. Carers also need to have an ability to talk with children and young people about what they think and feel and maintain a positive relationship

with them.

- **Working as part of a Team**

Foster carers need to have an ability to communicate and work with a wide range of people, including the child's family, social workers and other professionals involved. They also need to play a part in contributing to the plan for each child and attend and participate in reviews for children in their care.

It is important that any information foster carers receive about children in their care is kept confidential and that carers are familiar and up to date with Caerphilly County Borough Councils policies and procedures.

There is an expectation on carers to complete daily recording logs about the child's routine and significant events. The information needs to reflect contact arrangements, attendance at Looked After Children (LAC) review meetings, planning meetings/case conference, hospital/dental appointments, daily events and concerns.

Additional incidents such as if the child has an accident, injury or illness and receives medication, medical treatment and/or first aid also need to be recorded and you will be provided with forms to complete. There needs to be a willingness from carers to learn about what needs to be recorded and how. There are some guidelines of how/what to record on the back of the recording sheets (see appendices for a copy of the recording sheets).

Your allocated worker will collect the recordings during home visits and will read and sign them. The original recordings will be stored on the child's file.

- **Own development**

Becoming a foster carer will have an impact on your own family and it is important to recognize this and help them understand the needs of a looked after child.

It is also important for you as foster carers to ensure that you have the ability to sustain positive relationships through periods of stress. This is necessary as fostering can be a stressful task. Carers who have good support networks often find that they are able to remain positive and talk through issues. Caerphilly has a number of foster carer support groups that meet on a regular basis (please refer to support section).

As a foster carer there will be an expectation that you will take part fully in training opportunities to continually improve your understanding and knowledge.

Once you have gained a number of years experience of fostering and attended training, you will have the opportunity to be considered as a **'career'** carer. This brings another level of commitment to the fostering task, as we ask carers to be involved in recruiting events, training and projects that are outside of and in addition

to looking after children. It is acknowledged that this role is not for every carer as some of our carers are happy to solely concentrate on the children in their care.

For those that are interested in working toward 'career' carer status there are additional tasks that need to be met which come under the same four headings. These include:

Additional responsibilities for Career Foster Carers

As a career foster carer there are additional tasks you will need to meet under the same headings as above.

- **Caring for Children and Young People**

Career carers are asked to continue to offer support to young people who have moved on in order to help them adapt to independent living.

The carers are expected to be available during the day. If in employment, carers need to be flexible in their working hours and need to be available to return home in an emergency. They need to be able to work with different approaches to change behaviour, as they may have to work with children or young people with challenging behaviour using skills to manage and divert the behaviour. This could also include children who are experiencing problems with school including exclusions. In addition they need to be able to provide appropriate levels of care for children and young people with complex needs.

- **Providing a Safe and Caring Environment**

Career carers need to be able to maintain a positive relationship with a child who is displaying extremely challenging behaviour and work with a child who is at risk of significant harm using ways to minimise risks. There is an expectation that they will move children on in a planned way even when the placement is on the verge of breaking down and they need to provide a high level of supervision to children and young people in their care.

- **Working as part of a Team**

Career carers are asked to be available to attend and assist at recruitment and training events and actively promote fostering within local communities and with other foster carers.

- **Own Development**

Career carers need to be willing to look after a child in an emergency with little notice. They need to attend the career carer development group on a regular basis and assist in the development of new foster carers by befriending and giving advice.

For a detailed description of all the tasks, see the task description on the foster carers website. http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/pdf/health_SocialCare/foster-carers-task-description.pdf

2.2 Foster Panel

- **Foster carer agreement**

Now that your assessment has been seen at foster panel and a decision made by the agency decision maker, you will be provided with a written foster carer agreement.

This agreement lists what you can expect from Social Services and what is expected from you as a foster carer. It also states your 'approval status' as mentioned above. You are required to sign two copies of the foster carer agreement, one of which is for you to keep and the other, we will keep on our files. A new 'foster carer agreement' will be sent for you to sign when there are any changes to your 'approval status'.

You need to ensure that you read the foster carer agreement carefully and we would recommend that you keep it together with your handbook so it can be easily located.

- **Foster carer annual reviews**

After you have been approved for one year, an annual review will be held within your home, which provides an opportunity to appraise the last year. The review will look at the positives and challenges that have been faced within the year, the skills that you have developed and plan for future training needs. The review also considers any changes to 'approval status'.

As an authority, we are required to carry out an annual review of all approved foster carers at least once a year. A review may be held earlier if there has been a significant event such as a change of foster carer group, change of approval status or any other event, which is considered to be significant. The decision to hold an additional review may be made by the Fostering Team Manager. A review must be held where there has been an allegation against a foster carer.

An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will chair the majority of the reviews and for your first review, once their report has been written and shared with you it will be presented to foster panel. In the future annual review reports may not need to go to foster panel if there have been no changes for example. Your allocated worker will advise you of this. If you would like a copy of our panel procedures, please request this via your allocated worker.

You will be invited to attend foster panel, as you were for your approval but your attendance is not mandatory and your worker can attend on your behalf.

If you are unhappy with foster panels decision you have the right to appeal. Please refer to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) in the A-Z guide for more information.

- **Termination of Approval**

‘Termination of approval’ is the term we use to cease a person’s approval as a foster carer.

- You will be kept fully informed by your allocated worker when the fostering agency is considering terminating your approval.
- You will be advised in writing when the decision has been made to terminate your approval.

The Fostering Service may decide to recommend termination of approval if it considers you are no longer suitable, alternatively you have a right to resign at any time. If you do make the decision to resign it is important to consider the children and young people who may still be in placement and to consider the arrangements which may need to be made for them.

2.3 Additional responsibilities for all carers

- **Confidentiality**

As an approved foster carer you are agreeing to keep the information shared with you about children and young people in strictest confidence. The information must not be shared with neighbours, friends or relatives unless necessary and only when they are likely to be involved in the care of the child or young person.

If you are unsure what you can share, please discuss with your fostering worker or the child or young person’s worker.

All records concerning fostered children or young people are kept on behalf of the Directorate and must be kept in a secure place. A lockable storage box is provided to you for this purpose.

Once a child or young person’s placement has ended all relevant paperwork must be returned to your allocated worker.

When you cease fostering please return the storage box to the fostering team.

- **DBS**

DBS's (previously known as CRB's) need to be completed every 3 years and are needed for your foster carer review. Please help us with this by completing the DBS forms we send you at the necessary time.

- **Medicals**

Medicals also need to be renewed every 3 years. There is an expectation on you as foster carers, once you receive a notification letter from the fostering team, to arrange an appointment with your GP so the medical can take place. On some occasions it may be necessary for you to have an early medical but your allocated worker will inform you of this. Medicals are also checked as part of the foster carers annual review.

- **Access to your files**

As you are aware, files are opened and stored securely at Foxes Lane, Oakdale in respect of all foster carers approved by Caerphilly County Borough Council. The authority has an access to files policy. If you wish to see your file you will need to write to the fostering Team Manager making this request. You will find it helpful if you discuss your request with your allocated worker who will provide you with support.

2.4 Your children who also foster

We recognise that if you have your own children, they will play a part within your 'fostering family' and their support in this can be beneficial for both you, as carers and the looked after child in placement. As a result of this we arrange support groups for your own children. More information regarding these groups can be found in the support section of this handbook.