

Section 3 – Foster Carer Support

3.1 Fostering Worker

There are many forms of support that the Fostering Team offer to you as approved foster carers. These are:

- **Role**

In the first instance you will be allocated a Fostering Worker. The role of the worker is to provide support and offer advice and guidance to direct you through your time as a foster carer. This will include telephone contact, home visits and accompanying you to meetings eg LAC reviews.

- **Home Visits**

Your worker will visit you at home every four - six weeks as this is a statutory requirement. The purpose of these visits are to discuss what has been happening and to discuss any worries or concerns you may have. Some visits will be just with you as foster carers, other times it may be with you and the children who are placed in your care.

Your worker will also complete a formal supervision visit every three months whereby the visit is recorded on a supervision form. The supervision visit allows you and your worker the opportunity to discuss your overall performance including your family, the care of children placed and learning opportunities that are available. The supervision form will be placed on your foster carer file within the office and your worker will give you a copy for your own records.

Your Fostering worker also has to undertake at least one unannounced home visit to your home every year. This is an opportunity for your worker to visit you as you go about your daily life and to ensure the child/children you are caring for are being cared for appropriately.

- **Duty**

The Fostering Team provide an office duty service Monday – Thursday 8:30am – 5:00pm and Friday 8:30 – 4:30pm This means that there is always a duty worker who you can contact should your Fostering Worker not be available if you require support or advice.

The team also provide an out of hours telephone duty system. This is where the Fostering Workers alternate a telephone service outside of office hours, every night of the week – Sunday through to Saturday 6:00pm – 10:00pm The purpose of this service is for the Fostering Workers to contact you to offer support and advice following a placement being made or if there are difficulties within placement.

- Out of Hours Support

You can also contact out of hours should you have any queries or for instance to report an accident or emergency where a child has needed medical treatment or to report if a child has absconded.

The team are also supported by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT). EDT operates from office closure at 5:00pm through until the following morning at 8:30am when the office re-opens. EDT are qualified social workers who can be contacted for emergency support or advice that is unable to wait until the following day. You should contact EDT in emergency situations such as if a child has absconded or if a child has been harmed in anyway.

3.3 Learning and Development Opportunities

- Induction Programme

Following your approval there is an expectation that you complete induction training within eighteen-months of approval. This is in line with the Welsh Government Induction Framework for Foster Carers. During this time you will be invited to attend the following courses:

- Paediatric First Aid
- Health and Well-being of Looked after Children
- Education: from nursery to independence
- Safeguarding Looked after Children in Need of Protection
- Safer Caring
- Understanding Development and Behaviour
- Listening and Communication
- Improving Outcomes for Looked after Children

These courses will help improve your knowledge and skills as a foster carer and understand your role in caring for children within the looked after children's system.

The Fostering Service provides a variety of opportunities for you to develop your skills as foster carers so that you can develop knowledge and skills that are required to meet the challenges and the level of care children in the looked after system require. This includes an Induction training programme, formal training, support groups etc.

- Formal Training

As foster carers you will be expected to continue to attend training courses as part of your ongoing professional development.

Throughout the year, there are many training courses that are available. Your link worker will nominate you for training and you will receive confirmation via the training department. Child Protection and Paediatric First Aid have to be completed every three years to keep updated with changes in policies and procedures.

As well as offering training courses throughout the day we also hold 'twilight courses' that are run during evenings for those foster carers who are in employment.

We also have the opportunity for you to complete 'on line training'. These are training courses that can be completed within your own home and in your own time. We offer a variety of modules such as, Health, Education and Safer Caring and you have approximately six weeks to complete each module. Your link worker can nominate you for this.

You will be able to locate a full list of training courses that are available on the foster carers website.

- **Qualification Credit Framework (QCF)**

As a foster carer you will have the opportunity to complete the QCF level 3 in Childcare. This is a recognized qualification where you will have to attend college on a monthly basis and complete various modules that are assessed by an internal verifier. You can be nominated by your link worker to complete this, however you have to make a commitment to complete the course within two years of commencing. The intake is September of each year.

- **Resource Library**

There is a resource library available based within the fostering office. You are able to loan items such as books, games and dvd's for one month at a time via a booking in and out system by your link worker. You can also request an extension if needed.

The fostering website has a comprehensive list of the items that are available.

3.4 Support Groups

- Probationary/Mainstream Group

This is a support group that is run once every four months during the evening 6:30-8:30pm. It is aimed at newly approved foster carers or mainstream foster carers. The purpose is to meet other foster carers to gain advice and support as well as having information sessions from guest speakers.

- Career Carer Group

This support group is specifically for career foster carers. They are run once every three months during the morning 10:00 – 12:00pm and are held in three different geographical areas across the borough. These areas are subject to change depending on the number of attendees. This is a mandatory group for career carers whereby information and training is delivered by guest speakers and staff from the fostering team. It is also used as a forum where advice and support can be shared and gained.

- Men Who Care

This is a support group that is especially for male foster carers, as it is felt that as the majority of male foster carers work they miss out on valuable support and training. It is held on a monthly basis during the evening 7:00 – 9:00pm This is an opportunity to meet other male foster carers to gain advice, support and information as well as advice and training from guest speakers.

- Children Who Care

Children Who Care is a support group for foster carers own children aged 4 – 16 years. The group meets three times per year during the school half term holidays – February, May and October. An activity is organized whereby the children can have a day out away from the fostering household and gain support and advice from other children in the same situation.

We also run training courses for foster carers own children. These have included first aid, internet safety and safer caring.

3.5 Other Supports

- **Peer Mentoring Scheme**

The Fostering Team also co-ordinate a Peer Mentoring Scheme. Following approval you will be allocated a peer mentor who will be an experienced career carer. They can be contacted to offer general support or advice. This service will last for 6 months initially and reviewed if longer mentoring required.

- **Fostering Network Membership**

On approval as foster carers, you will be registered with the Fostering Network, be provided with an information booklet and have your membership renewed on an annual basis providing you remain approved as foster carers. The fostering network provides support, advice and information, as well as other benefits such as discount vouchers for family days out and home insurance.

- **Foster Carer Website**

The foster carer website is available at www.caerphilly.gov.uk/fostering The website provides advice and information in relation to all aspects of fostering and is updated on a regular basis.

- **Foster Carer Forum**

Caerphilly Foster Carers have their own foster carer forum on facebook. This is a closed group and is not open to the general public. You will need to request to join the forum by your link worker and sign a user agreement before joining. The forum is an opportunity to share ideas and information and gain support and advice from other foster carers.

- **Foster Carer Newsletter**

A newsletter is sent via e-mail once every three months. If you do not have an e-mail address this will be sent to you through the post. The newsletter provides updated information in respect of what is happening within the fostering service.

- **Foster Carer Handbook**

There is also detailed information provided within this handbook. The information contained within this is changed and updated on a regular basis to reflect any changes with the fostering service.