



# FAMILY FOSTERING PARTNERS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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## 1. All about Us

### i. Who we Are and How We Do Things

Family Fostering Partners is an Independent Fostering Provider with an office base in Cross Hands, Carmarthenshire. We exist to attract, assess, train, recruit, and support only the best Foster Parents, and to help them to provide the highest quality, family care, for the children who are looked after. Positive, trusting relationships between children and the adults who care for them are at the very core of how we work.

At Family Fostering Partners we have a set of important values, which describe the way in which we approach everything we do. These values are our promise to anyone who is part of our fostering family.

- We place children, and the importance of caring for their future at the heart of all that we do.
- We always apply a children-centred approach, where the welfare of the child is at the centre of everyone's thinking and actions.
- We vigorously support and promote the social interests and hobbies of children and young people so that they take part in a range of activities and lead an active and healthy lifestyle.
- We promote a culture that encourages candour, openness, and learning at all levels.
- We work in a professional partnership with our carers and respect, integrity and fairness are central to all aspects of our operations and provisions.

We believe that the best way to live our values is: -

**To grow responsibly** - We grow carefully, recruiting the right Foster Parents, in the right place, and at the right time. We never want to lose our supportive family feel, where every young person and foster family are personally known, feel valued, and are respected.

**To have fun** - We love our work and are proud to be part of helping children be the very best version of themselves. We want to let our passion for making a positive difference shine through.

**To inspire** - We try our best to be the best, and we work with our colleagues, customers, children, and young people in a way that makes Family Fostering Partners memorable.

**To involve** - We know that we can learn and improve, and we do this by consulting with, and involving Foster Parents, birth children and looked after children to shape the way that we do things. Your voice is important to us.

**To evolve** – We are not afraid to think outside of the box and to be creative and innovative. We do this by listening to advice and feedback, and developing new ways of delivering care, without ever compromising on our high standards.

By working in this way we can provide

- **Children in care** with an experience of well matched, stable, and nurturing family homes. Places where can feel they can belong, and where their special skills and talents are helped to develop. Children that we look after grow and thrive, because we help them to form trusting relationships with their care givers and to feel listened to and respected.
- **Foster Parents** with first class support, supervision, and training. This is our way on helping Foster Parents provide and maintain a welcoming, safe, and caring, home from home.
- **Local Authority partners** with high quality family homes for the children that need care. Our attention to detail enables us to ensure children looked after by Family Fostering Partners are living their best lives.

By doing our work well, we provide children with a secure base from which they can grow and flourish.

Everything that we do at Family Fostering Partners is overseen by a Board of Directors who meet regularly to check that we are living up to our standards, aims and values. The Board of Directors also help us to shape our vision for the future.

<b>Name of the Service</b>	<b>Family Fostering Partners Ltd</b>
<b>Legal Entity</b>	Family Fostering Partners is a Limited Company Company Registration Number - 09443529
<b>Registered Company Address</b>	Office 1, Block B, Llys Y Barcud, Cross Hands Carmarthenshire SA14 6RX
<b>Responsible Individual</b>	The Responsible Individual is Judith Rees-Howells who is also an Owner/ Managing Director.
<b>Manager of Service</b>	The Fostering Manager is Amanda Davies.
<b>Service Address</b>	Office 1, Block B, Llys Y Barcud, Cross Hands Carmarthenshire SA14 6RX

## ii. About this Statement of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with Part 2 of The Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019 and the Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services 2019. The document also notes the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, The Regulation, and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, The Regulated Services (Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2017 and The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018.

The Statement of Purpose is an important document which explains how Family Fostering Partners ensures that we comply with the law; outlines the service that Family Fostering Partners provide and how we deliver and manage this; how we support our Foster Parents; how we will ensure that the welfare of the children in our care is prioritised and how we recruit, train, and supervise Foster Parents and staff.

Our Statement of Purpose provides a range of information to inform many different people including, CIW; Children and young people who are looked after by our Foster Parents; our staff; our Foster Parents and prospective Foster Parents; Local Authority customers; our partners from health and educational establishments; any parent or guardian of any child placed with the fostering service, and the public.

This Statement of Purpose is a living document and so we update it regularly, and at least annually. We can update it more often if there are any significant changes for the organisation. When we make amendments to the Statement of Purpose they are read and approved by our senior management team. A copy of the Statement of Purpose is also available to download from our website [www.familyfosteringpartners.co.uk](http://www.familyfosteringpartners.co.uk).

When children and young people come to stay on one of our foster homes, Family Fostering Partners provides them with a **Welcome Guide**. This is written and presented in an age-appropriate way to make sure that they understand the important information it contains about the agency, about our foster parents, the standard of care and respect they can expect, and who to speak with if they need extra help or want to discuss a worry or complaint.

Alongside this Statement of Purpose, Family Fostering Partners also has policies and procedures that provide clear guidance for staff, Foster Parents, fostering applicants and Panel members. Our policies and procedures are also regularly reviewed and updated. Approved Foster Parents with Family

Fostering Partners can access copies of the most current versions of our policies and procedures via **Intuitive Care**, the agency's secure database, and copies are made available to our staff and Panel members through our internal systems.

Family Fostering Partners is regularly inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to ensure the aims and objectives described in this Statement of Purpose are achieved.

Family Fostering Partners is committed to innovating and improving services to ensure that children's care and well-being is central to our service delivery.

### **iii. Our Principles for Equality and Diversity**

We want to always work openly and fairly, and to have the highest level of integrity in everything that we do. We expect the same standards from anyone who provides a service on our behalf, this includes our staff and foster parents. To help us work to our principles, we make sure that equality is at the very heart of our staff recruitment and training, our foster parent assessment and training, and our policies and procedures.

We want to take every opportunity to build a fostering agency that embraces diversity, values individual difference, and always promotes equality of opportunity. We make sure that these important commitments are rooted in our day to day working practices with all children and young people, with our foster families, our colleagues, our customers, and any other stakeholders. We try to identify and overcome barriers that sometimes prevent an individual's access to information, to services, and to employment. In this way we can provide equal opportunities for people with different needs. We never tolerate discrimination at Family Fostering Partners.

The children that we look after come from diverse backgrounds and will have had different life experiences, and this is exactly why we encourage the widest range of fostering families and staff from all sectors of the community. For staff appointments we have a Safer Recruitment Policy which gathers information from a range of sources to verify that potential applicants share our values and ethos, whilst our Foster Parent recruitment process and the training, both pre, and post-approval checks that we approve families who can respect, support, and promote the ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic background of those children and young people that we look after.

## 2. Family Fostering Partners

### i. The Location of our Service and our expertise

Family Fostering Partners is an Independent Fostering Agency that recruits, assesses, trains, supervises and supports Foster Parents across Wales. We operate from our office based at Cross Hands and have Link Workers allocated to geographical areas to ensure all our foster parents, and the children in their care, have ready access to supervision and support.

**The Responsible Individual (RI)** for Family Fostering Partners is **Judith Rees Howells**. In addition to the RI role Judith is also the Managing Director and member of the Family Fostering Partners Board of Directors. Judith's first language is Welsh, she is a qualified Social Worker of thirty years' experience. She holds an MSc (Distinction) in Management, a BA (Hons) in Social Policy and Administration, a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, a Diploma in Applied Social Studies, and a Post Qualifying Social Work Award. During her career Judith has worked in child protection in both the public and the third sector and has twenty years of experience in fostering within the private sector. She has in the past been a Registered Manager with CIW, and a Responsible Individual with Ofsted, and has worked in senior management roles in both Wales and England.

The RI holds accountability for providing assurance that the service is safe, well run and complies with regulations, promoting a culture of openness and ensuring clear lines of accountability between company owners, directors, senior managers and frontline practice. The RI works alongside the Head of Fostering as the senior management team with responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the service.

Within Family Fostering Partners, the Head of Fostering compliments the role of the RI. The RI and the Head of Fostering have clear role descriptions and work closely together to ensure our foster parents, and the children we look after, receive the highest standard of support and safe care, promoting a culture focussed on the impact that care and support services have on individual's lives, well-being and personal outcomes. The Responsible Individual also provides Line Management supervision to the Head of Fostering.

The Head of Fostering has responsibility for the quality assurance of operational matters, fostering assessments, Panel, foster parent reviews, the delivery of training and development to both staff and foster parents, HR systems (including safer recruitment), and the update and review of the agency's policies and procedures and for monitoring compliance with the law and fostering standards. The



Head of Fostering is also the Senior Safeguarding Lead for the agency and Complaints Officer for Family Fostering Partners.

The **Head of Fostering** for Family Fostering Partners is **Bernadette Millis**. Bernadette is a qualified Social Worker of 28 years' experience. She holds a Level 5 NVQ Diploma in Management and Leadership (QCF), BETEC Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership, Post Qualifying Award in Social Work, Post Qualifying Award in Child Care, Diploma in Social Work, Diploma in Applied Social Studies, BA Hons Psychology and is NNEB trained. Bernadette is also a qualified course facilitator for the Fostering Changes Programme. During the first 14 years of her social work career Bernadette has worked in front line childcare services in England and Wales, including 4 years as Team Manager. For the last 14 years she has worked exclusively in the field of fostering, including the last 8 years as Head of Fostering for Family Fostering Partners (previously being the agency's Registered Manager with CIW and then with Social Care Wales).

The Head of Fostering is supported in her role by comprehensive and well-established systems, policies, procedures for the service, and through robust staffing arrangements in place. The Head of Fostering also provides direct Line Management supervision and support to our two Fostering Managers, one of whom is registered with Social Care Wales.

The **Fostering Manager** registered with Social Care Wales is **Amanda Davies**. Amanda joined Family Fostering Partners in January 2023 having qualified as a social worker more than 22 years ago. Amanda has experience of working in Local Authorities and the third sector both as a frontline worker and a contact centre manager and has also worked for other independent fostering agencies as a Regional and Registered Manager. In addition to her Social Work qualification Amanda also has an NVQ Level 5 in Leadership and Management.

Our second Fostering Manager is **Hannah Racher** who qualified as a social worker in 2016 and joined Family Fostering Partners in July 2019. Hannah has experience in front line social work within a Local Authority in addition to a wealth of experience of supporting and supervising foster parents and in completing Form F assessments of foster parents. Prior to entering social work Hannah ran her own childminding service. Hannah holds a BSc in Social Work and an NVQ Level 5 qualification in Management and Leadership.

Our Fostering Managers have responsibility for the supervision and support of Link Workers staff who in turn provide direct support and supervision to the agency's Foster Parents, and for managing day-

to-day service delivery to both the children and young people in our care and to our foster parents. They are accountable for managing, leading, and supporting the staff team on a daily basis, promoting good conduct and best practice, facilitating access to learning, giving feedback and addressing concerns. This includes promoting a positive workplace culture; staff induction, learning and ongoing development; monitoring practice; supervision and appraisal; delegation; complying with professional and regulatory requirements; and addressing unsatisfactory performance and misconduct.

**Link Workers** are allocated to geographical areas, and/or carer specialisms to ensure all our Foster Parents, and the children in their care, have easy and timely access to professional supervision and support. Our Link Workers have a range of relevant qualifications and experience which make them able to perform their roles to a high standard.

**Carly James-Grey** has a PQF Level 3 Qualification for Probation Workers; a Diploma in Home Based Child Care, Level 3 and a Level 3 City and Guilds in Preparing to Teach in the lifelong learning sector. Carly has worked with children and families in a variety of roles and capacities, including as a partner Link Worker in the Probation Service. She has supported families that have experienced domestic abuse and has recently worked with the Police Service to help identify vulnerabilities within families. She is an accredited Trauma Recovery Practitioner and has extensive experience of delivering ACE's training. Carly joined Family Fostering Partners in March 2020.

**Anthony Jones** gained a Human Sciences Degree in Early Childhood Studies in 2008, a Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development – Advanced Practice in 2015 and holds NVQ Level 3 Certificates in Leadership and Management, OCN certificates in Working with Parents and Communication. Anthony has worked as a Community Nursery Nurse for 4 years with the NHS delivering a public health message in schools, nurseries, family homes and community settings; for 2 years as an Early Language Development Worker for the City and County of Swansea, promoting play and language skills for children aged 0 to 3 years through 1-2-1 home sessions and within group settings, this also included WellComm screening for all eligible children aged 20 months, baby massage for parents who have a baby aged 6 weeks to 8 months, promoting bonding and relaxation and organising events. Anthony has also worked as a volunteer for SCVS providing respite and behaviour help for a primary school aged child.

**Georgia Williams** has a Level 3 in Childcare Learning and Development and is a qualified Nursery Nurse. She has worked as a Childcare Worker within Flying Start and has experience of providing family

support, parenting, and safeguarding advice. Georgia joined Family Fostering Partners in February 2020.

**Stacey Banks** is a qualified social worker with seven years' experience. During her career she has worked as a volunteer supporting vulnerable adults in the community, and as a social worker in frontline childcare in a busy Local Authority. In 2021, Stacey moved to specialise in a Youth Justice Team before joining Family Fostering Partners in February 2023.

**Rebecca Parnell** worked for thirteen years as an Early Language Development Worker before becoming a Child Care Manager in a Community Primary located in a deprived area of Swansea. In 2019 she changed roles to become a Senior Child Care Worker in a multi-disciplinary Flying Start team, working with vulnerable children and their parents encouraging engagement in positive parenting sessions and play sessions. Rebecca holds a BA (Econ), a Certificate in Early Childhood Studies, a BTEC National Diploma and a CCLD Level 5 in Management.

Family Fostering Partners also has a Fostering Support Worker, **Stephanie Evans** who can offer practical support to our foster parents with transportation, birth family time and day care.

The staffing structure within Family Fostering Partners enables the agency to maintain a high level of visiting, supervision, and support to our Foster Parents. The RI, Head of Fostering and Fostering Managers meet regularly as part of the management team to discuss, assess and review operational functions, service improvement plans and development. This includes reviewing the staffing structure to ensure it remains appropriate and responsive to growth in Foster Parent numbers.

The **Reviewing Officer** is **Anne Marie Evans**. The Independent Reviewing Officer completes all Foster Parent Reviews for the agency. Anne Marie has a MA in Social Work and a BSC in Sociology. She qualified in 2007, was for 4 years a front-line children's Social Worker within Local Authority social services, working with children in need; child protection; in the court arena; and with children looked after. Since July 2011 she has worked exclusively in the field of fostering, where her specialism was Parent and Child Fostering. Anne Marie joined Family Fostering Partners in July 2016 and prior to taking up the full time position of Reviewing Officer she worked in the roles of supervising social worker and fostering manager, and also completed the GroBrain facilitators course. Anne Marie also sits on the agency's Welsh and English Panels. Anne-Marie holds NVQ Level 5 qualification in Management and Leadership.

**Hannah Jones** is the **Foster Parent Training and Retention Manager** who co-ordinates all our Foster Parent training and delivers our in-house training. She has a QCF Level 5 Management qualification in Childcare Learning and Development and a Train the Trainer qualification. Hannah has extensive experience of working with children and families, working for 12 years for Faith and Families as the Setting Manager, overseeing the day to day running of a busy Flying Start service in Swansea. She has worked directly with birth parents and their children, and with Foster Parents (who have both short- and long-term placements) and the children placed in their care to understand and positively manage behaviour. She has also worked as a Project Co-ordinator overseeing the management of 5 Family Centres and has been a telephone counsellor for Childline. Hannah has worked exclusively in fostering with Family Fostering Partners since 2018 and is a facilitator to deliver the GroBrain baby course to the agency's Foster Parents. Hannah is an NSPCC certified trainer having completed Training for Safeguarding and Child Protection Trainers course. Hannah Jones is Welsh speaking.

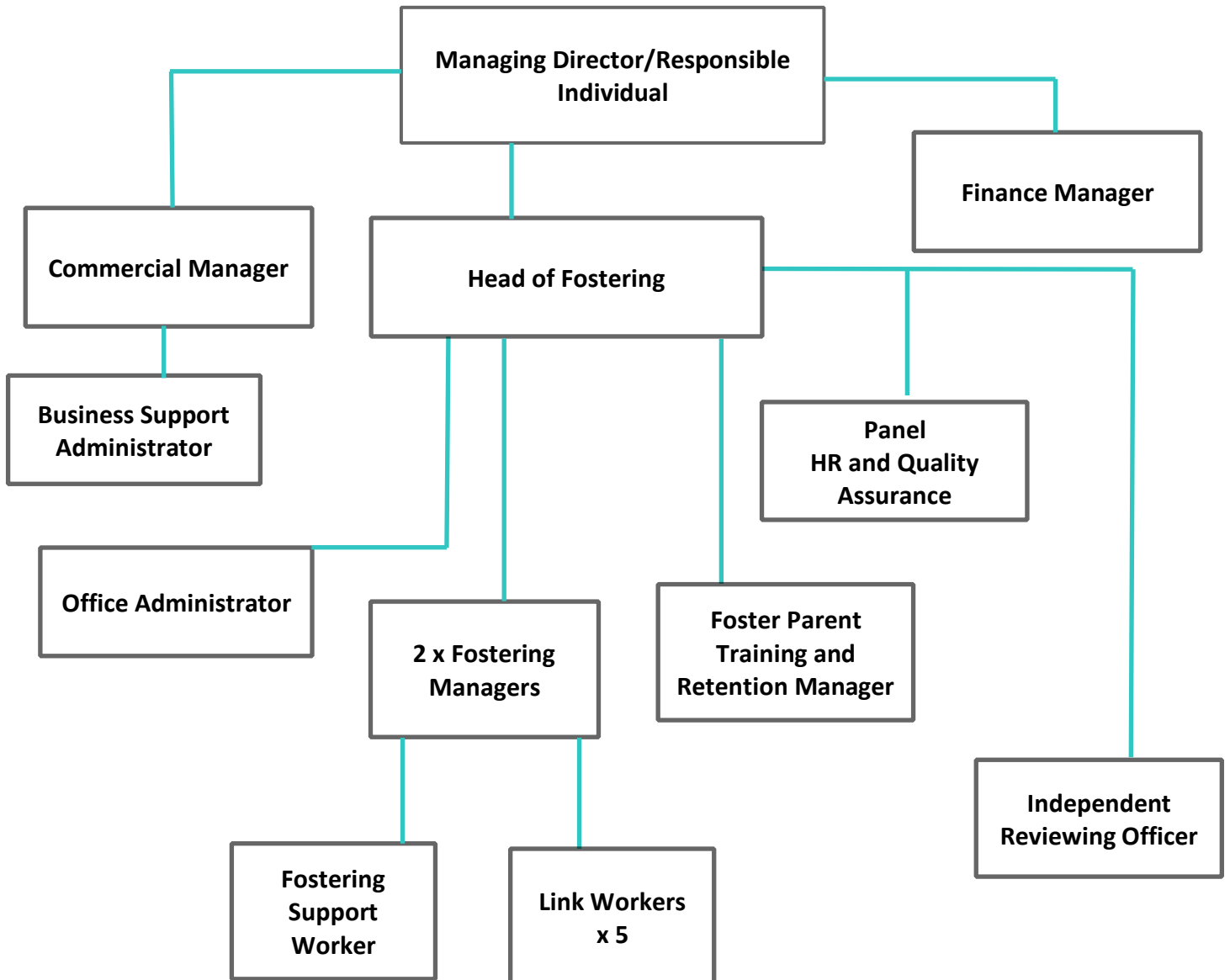
**Curon Howells** is the **Commercial Manager** responsible for driving business growth within the company and managing contracts with our local authority partners. Curon is Welsh speaking. Curon has a Law and Politics degree, Management MSC and has CMA membership.

Staff, whether directly employed on a service contract or providing services under a service agreement are subject to the full range of enquiries including.

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks
- Verbal and written references from previous and current employers, and character reference
- Copies of qualifications
- Health and identity checks

All staff working for Family Fostering Partners, on a permanent, part-time, or self-employed basis are covered by appropriate professional indemnity insurance, and all have role profiles and contracts of employment. Insurance liabilities cover is in line with Local Authority contractual requirements.

ii. The Structure of the Service



### 3. The Services we Provide

Family Fostering Partners work in partnership with our Local Authority customers to provide a wide range of foster homes for children and young people from birth until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. All foster homes are matched to ensure a good fit between the needs of the young person and the skills and experience of the Foster Parent. Our focus is always on delivering good outcomes and keeping children in family-based care.

The child or young person is encouraged to be at the centre of the planning for the placement from the outset and their views about their foster home and their lives are sought and considered.

Wherever possible, children and young people are placed with Foster Parents that match their racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic background. Their psychological, emotional, identity, educational and health care needs are always considered, met, monitored, and promoted. In every decision, the safeguarding and protection of children and young people are our primary concern.

Our service provision includes:

**Short Term Care** - where children and young people are matched with a Foster Parent who supports them for either a specific fixed term of days, weeks, or months, or on an open-ended basis until the long-term plan for the child/young person's future has been determined.

**Long Term Care** - Foster care becomes a route to permanence for children who cannot return to their birth families, but where adoption is not an option. Our Foster Parents offer children and young people a secure base until they are old enough to live independently.

**Enhanced Need Placements** - Family Fostering Partners has Foster Parents who are skilled and experienced in working with children and young people who are defined by the commissioning Local Authority as having complex needs. Added support may be made available to such placements.

**Solo placements** - with Foster Parents who are skilled and experienced at working with children and young people whose needs are so complex that they prevent the placement of any other children who are looked after within the family. Added support is made available to such placements.

**Sibling Groups** - for brothers and sisters who are all need to be placed together with Foster Parents.

**Emergency Placements** - provided by Family Fostering Partners parents at short notice when unforeseen emergencies do not allow for any prior planning. Family Fostering Partners runs a 24-hour service, which allows emergency placements to be identified, safely matched, and where appropriate, made out of usual working hours.

**Respite Care**- We recruit families who can provide overnight breaks for parents and/or other foster parents. Respite placements (the terminology we use for children is 'sleep overs') can be one off events, or may be time limited, but may also be an integral and regular feature of a child/young person's care plan.

**Parent and Child placements (PAC)** - These are time limited placements usually 12 to 16 weeks in duration but can be longer, where foster parents provide a highly specialised service to a parent(s) and their baby and/or young child(ren) to support the development of their parenting capacity within a family home and for the placing local authority to work with the parent(s) to make an assessment of their ability to meet the long term needs of their child/children. All Foster Parents offering this type of placement, must show that they have the experience, knowledge, skills, and aptitude to do so and are required to undergo specialist training for the role.

**Step Down**- Specifically designed for young people who are ready and able to move out of the residential sector into a family environment. These placements may also be suitable for young people who have experienced multiple placement breakdowns or are placing themselves at risk. All Foster Parents offering this type of placement, must show that they have the experience, knowledge, skills, and aptitude to do so. Additional support is made available to Foster Parents providing such placements.

**When I'm Ready**– A governmental initiative to support young people, on reaching the age of 18, to stay with their former Foster Parents. This is not the same as a foster placement. The young person is a young adult and a care leaver, and the Foster Parent is no longer acting in the same capacity for that young adult. Family Fostering Partners support and encourage our Foster Parents to offer a When I'm Ready arrangement whenever possible. Our commitment to the initiative includes early awareness of the arrangement When I'm Ready by its promotion during the Fostering Assessment, the Skills to Foster training, post-approval training, and during Foster Parent supervision (when appropriate).

## 4. How we Deliver our Services

Our standards of care are designed to ensure that Family Fostering Partners' service provides safe, secure, and nurturing foster homes for children and young people of all ages.

### i. How we manage planned, urgent and respite admissions

Every child and young person who receive a service from Family Fostering Partners are valued as unique individuals, and we take great care before offering any placement resource.

We recruit a diverse range of foster families to ensure that we can be flexible and child centred in the care that we provide, and matching is integral to the way in which we deliver our services, maintain high standards of care, and promote best outcomes.

Every placement made by the agency, even those made in an emergency, are carefully matched to align the needs of children and young people with the skills, experience, and interests of our foster families. We firmly believe that a rigorous approach to matching children referred for placements with potential foster families, is fundamental to achieving placement success.

Most foster placements in Wales are commissioned through the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR); a secure on-line commissioning and matching tool used by all 22 unitary Welsh authorities. We access as much comprehensive information as possible during the referral stage to enable us to fully understand the child or young person's individual circumstances, their personality, likes and interests, to know their needs and what is important to them and the desired placement outcomes.

Relationships for Children Looked After are key to increasing their emotional resilience and wellbeing and therefore we put relationships at the heart of our service. Matching the needs of children referred to the agency, with the skills and interests of our parents is a vital part of the way in which we ensure a high- quality service to children across Wales.

Family Fostering Partners will not make placements based merely on Foster Parent vacancies, but rather will seek to place children with foster families whom we consider are well matched to them and therefore who are able to provide positive wellbeing outcomes supporting children to grow up happily and successfully and be well looked after.



All referrals are processed by our experienced Fostering Managers in active consultation with the Head of Fostering whom are qualified Social Workers. All information known about the child from the referral is always shared with the potential Foster Parents, verbally over the phone and/or in person and through a secure Cloud.

Once Foster Parents have agreed to be put forward for a particular child/child we complete a very detailed matching document evidencing how any potential foster placement will meet and promote a child/young persons' needs around

- Health and wellbeing
- Family and Social Relationships
- Play and leisure
- Education and Learning
- Emotional and Behavioural Development
- Social Presentation
- Self-Care Skills
- Identity

In addition to completing this very detailed matching document on the CCSR data base, we also provide the local authority seeking the placement with a written profile of the Foster Parents with photographs, setting out details of the family, their home and their experience and training, and when appropriate we will provide a Child friendly Foster Parent profile for use by the child's social worker with the child/young person to introduce them to the foster family.

We take the decision to offer a foster home to a child very seriously and as such, all decisions are overseen by a Fostering Manager, and/or the Head of Fostering. This is still the case when placements are made in an emergency. Out of hours there is always an experienced manager available who will make the decisions to place a child. The head of Fostering or Responsible Individual is available 24/7 for consultation.

This approach ensures we match the uniqueness of the child to a Foster Parents qualities and strengths and that children, young people and their parents who are supported and cared for by our service are placed with foster families who have the right attributes, skills, and knowledge to meet their needs. This may include matching with Foster Parents who are trained in specialised areas such as managing challenging behaviour, caring for those who have been sexually abused, caring for

adolescents, or caring for children with disabilities. If gaps are found in the Foster Parents' experience, added support, services or training will be offered.

Whenever possible, Family Fostering Partners Link Workers are present at the foster home when children are placed and use the opportunity to ensure that basic paperwork is received from the Local Authority Social Worker at the earliest opportunity. When paperwork is not immediately available, Family Fostering Partners has tracking and escalation processes in place to ensure that this is received in the most efficient and timely manner.

## ii. Our Standards of Care and Support

We place secure and stable relationships between children and Foster Parents at the centre of service design and provision, fostering children's inclusion and belonging, whilst supporting and empowering Foster Parents to develop strong, trusting relationships with the children they care for.

Family Fostering Partners believes that all children, including children who are looked after should expect adult support to help them develop into the best possible version of themselves. To this end we ensure that all children placed with the agency and living in our foster homes are

- Helped to be as physically safe and emotionally healthy as possible.
- Involved in activities hobbies and interests.
- Have access to education, learning and development opportunities.
- Have control over their everyday life, and where relevant participation in work.
- Can maintain their linguistic, cultural and/or religious identities.
- Are supported to keep family and personal relationships.
- Can develop their potential by learning and practicing life skills.

The way in which we achieve this is person centred and will therefore vary depending on the specific circumstances of the child or young person, but we always operate within a framework that promotes an individual's holistic well-being. This framework includes.

- **A matching process** that gives weight to a child's hobbies, interests and their linguistic, cultural, and religious identities, pair these with the interests and the cultural, linguistic, and religious background of our foster families. For example, 20% of our foster families are Welsh speaking and Family Fostering Partners can offer a full active offer of the Welsh language to any children living in those homes.
- **Preparation and introductions** to our foster families whenever circumstances allow to ensure that the child can have some control over their everyday life. To this end we produce a child

friendly profile and can produce a video profile of each of our Foster Parents, which includes pictures of the home and the people who live there.

- **An Individual Safe Care Plan, Individual Risk Assessment and Behaviour Management Plan.**  
These plans are reviewed as required, but as a minimum prior to the child or young person's in care review to ensure each child stays as physically and emotionally safe as possible. Whenever possible and appropriate, children and young people are involved in the completion and review of these plans.
- **Building trusting and supportive relationships between staff and children** by making staff visible and familiar to children, taking time to play with them and taking an interest in them, and changing language, for example talking to children about 'sleep overs' instead of 'respite', Foster Parents instead of foster carers, and foster home instead of foster placement. Supporting young people to develop their sense of identity through talents, interests, aspirations and relationships, forms part of our routine activity with parents and children. Our staff organise and take part in children's activity days, and child and Foster Parent family days, and staff carry out life story work as the familiar and trusted adult in consultation with the placing local authority.
- All our Foster Parents maintain an **Individual Daily Log** on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Parent's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. These recordings are shared with the local authority. Foster Parents use the agency's database (Intuitive Care) to allow data to be recorded, checked, and shared in a secure format.
- We have high placement visiting with on average **fortnightly visits and supervision** from the agency Link Worker to monitor the quality of care being provided and to ensure that children and young people are provided with opportunities to take part in hobbies and activities, can have contact with people who are important in their lives and have opportunities to develop life skills for the future.
- **Access to overnight/day-care** from matched respite parents to the child. We also proactively assess family and friends of Foster Parents to provide this support to ensure the wellbeing of foster families.
- A minimum of two **Unannounced Visits** to Foster Parents, during which the child is seen alone, and the child's bedroom and clothing is checked. These visits focus on the child's overall wellbeing and ensure that care standards are maintained.
- An **Annual Review** of each parents' registration with the agency and of their ongoing suitability to fulfil the fostering role.

- Foster Parents have **On Call** access to advice and support from one of our Link Workers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The on-call service is also backed up and supported by a manager.

As all children are unique, we provide tailor made support to enhance the parent's ability to meet the unique needs of the child placed with them. This may include.

- One to one parenting work designed to meet the needs of the individual child.
- 'Gro Brain' training for all Foster Parents
- Pictorial childcare guides to use with parents who are placed with their children.
- Pre and in-placement planning meetings
- An enhanced level of visiting and supervision with advice, guidance, and reflection on practice.
- Peer mentoring and small group training with a focus on children's specific attachment needs
- Online learning including a suite of Webinars designed by the agency
- Support from a dedicated support worker, to provide daycare and one to one activities with children.

Family Fostering Partners is a bilingual agency and has an active offer for the Welsh language. Our website and all other information documents, including our Children's Guides are available in both English and Welsh, and some of our staff can provide a Welsh language service to anyone who requests this.

Our Children's Guides are also available in two different formats, one for younger children, which is also suitable for developmentally delayed children or those children who may have communication difficulties, and one for older children.

### **iii. Arrangements for Assessing, Planning, and Reviewing children's care**

When a child or young person is placed with Family Fostering Partners, their Care and Support Plan, prepared by the Local Authority, shapes, and influences the way in which the agency plans and delivers its services. Family Fostering Partners completes a placement agreement for every child who is placed with the agency. Where possible this is completed before the placement begins, but in case of an urgent need for care, this is completed within 24 hours of the child being placed. The child or young person is involved in this process in the most appropriate and child centred way.

Children are at the centre of the care they receive within Family Fostering Partners. To help children achieve wellbeing and the things that matter to them, whether that's to access a service through the medium of Welsh or English, to take part in out of school activities, to get a job, or to see the people

who matter to them most, we work in an open and transparent way with children and their parents to ensure their care and support is the best it can be.

For every child placed with the agency we complete an Individualised Safe Care Plan and if appropriate an added Risk Assessment and Behaviour Management Plan as soon as possible after the child is placed with us, to ensure their needs are understood and safeguarded. These plans are live documents and are regularly updated as the child or young person grows and their needs change. Children are encouraged to take an active part in this process to ensure their care plan is person centred and personalised to them and that their views are heard.

All children and young people in our foster families are registered with a GP, Dentist and Optician to find and address any unknown or unmet health needs. Our Foster Parents ensure that all the children they care for have their health needs met, taking them to routine and any specialist health appointments.

We provide every child with a 'Health Passport' detailing all health information, health appointments and health outcomes for the child. This goes with them if for example, they have a 'sleep over' (respite) with another Family Fostering Partners Foster Parent or designated Friend and Family support person assessed by the agency to provide this support. The Health Passport also accompanies the child or young person when they leave our care and are available to the child's Local Authority social Workers during their routine statutory visits.

When it is appropriate to do so, all efforts are made to support a child/young person to remain in the school where they are on roll, but when distance means that children who are looked after have to change schools, our foster families work in partnership with the child, their Link Worker and the Local Authority Social Worker to identify and ensure a successful transition to a suitable alternative mainstream school/ college or other education provision. This may include the Foster Parent and headteacher meeting to discuss the child's needs; the Foster Parent accompanying the child for introduction visits or negotiating a part-time timetable until a child is settled and feels confident to attend fulltime. In this way we help children feel supported and to achieve success.

We support our Foster Parents to communicate with their children's class teachers - daily if required, to attend all relevant meetings, attend parents' evenings, sports days, concerts, and other events. Our Foster Parents take an interest in, and have a routine for homework to be completed, offering to help

children if they get stuck. They also engage in informal learning outside of school and actively support extracurricular activities, enabling children to develop key life skills.

The progress that children make in our foster homes is reviewed during the supervision visits made to foster families by the agency's Link Workers. Our Link Workers must see and speak to children alone on at least every 3<sup>rd</sup> visit; to actively encourage children to participate in plans and meetings about them; to discuss their wellbeing outcomes and to understand on an individual level with our children what 'emotional wellbeing' means to them. This close engagement with people results in services which meet their needs. A written record of these visits is made and shared with the Foster Parent using Intuitive Care, a secure electronic data base, and records of visits focussing on the child or young person's progress are also made available to the Local Authority Social Worker.

Our latest CIW report verifies that young people in our care ***"have a voice and are encouraged to express their views in relation to their day to day lives and within the care planning process."*** (17<sup>th</sup> May 2018). The report confirms that the children we look after are ***"...regularly encouraged by their SSW's during visits to express their views, particularly regarding any worried they may have."*** (17<sup>th</sup> May 2018) and those children and young people are encouraged ***"to be creative, to follow their interests, exploring new challenges and experiencing a sense of achievement."*** (17<sup>th</sup> May 2018)

Children's progress is reviewed externally within the Children Looked After system. A Link Worker will always attend these meetings with parents, and we will always as appropriately support young people to attend and take an active role in these Local Authority led meetings. We provide training and supervision to enable Foster Parents and staff to be confident advocates for children in our care; to support the child's voice, to endorse their right to exercise control over their lives, and to be assisted to access formal advocacy services when required.

We also review placement outcomes and children's wellbeing internally through the Foster Parent annual review process. In addition to seeking the Foster Parents' and other professionals' views, we actively and creatively seek children's views on their placement as part of this process. Depending on the needs of the child and young person this may be through discussion, through play or questionnaires, which can be completed on paper or electronically.

Here is a selection of comments taken from young people, Foster Parent, parent, and professionals as part of the Foster Parent annual review process.

One young person writes ***“they treat me like their own child. They have trust in me.”*** Asked how she gets on with the people in her home, this young person comments ***“very well, it’s like I’m meant to be here”*** This young person feels part of the family and involved in decisions, commenting ***“I’m involved in everything, trips out, punishments, holidays’,*** they describe themselves as being ***“happy 😊.”*** They recognise that they are doing better in school and cite involvement in activities and interests as positive contributors to identity and emotional wellbeing.

Another young person writes ***“I like M and S (Foster Parent s), walking the dogs, making cakes, riding my bike.”*** Yet other writes how they like ***“the animals,” “T & K,”*** (the parents) and ***“the farm.”*** This young person describes their foster home as ***“amazing.”***

Local Authority Social Worker comments about our foster homes include the following.

- ***‘The Foster Parents show empathy and provide K with a platform to express himself in his own time, as well as to offer K options in most cases. Foster Parent s include K in decision making and again this enables him to feel safe, listened to and most importantly, part of their family. The care that K is receiving from his Foster Parent is excellent. All his physical emotional, and educational needs are being met. His Foster Parent has a good insight into the needs of children who are delayed and is able to manage all K’s behaviours in a positive way.’***
- ***“The Foster Parent has given C the opportunity to develop and understand things in an age-appropriate way, relevant to his needs and understanding. C has made considerable progress since being in placement ...he now presents as a young child with an understanding of appropriate behaviour and is progressing in his social capabilities.”***
- ***“X now has very few behavioural outbursts; this is indicative of how safe and happy he is in placement. Foster Parents also encourage X to engage in after school activities based on his likes and interests”.***

Feedback on the way in which Family Fostering Partners promotes education for the children in our care includes the following comments. A Headteacher writes, ***“the Foster Parents have established a strong relationship with the school ... are very supportive especially when X has experienced difficulties in school; their dealings with him are calm and reassuring.”***

A Foster Parent described how ***“X started at school part time in the mornings only in September and by November he was fulltime. He has settled so well and working extremely hard to catch up on***

***work he has missed out on... Regularly comes home with certificates. We are extremely proud at how hard he has worked. Our goals over the next year are to help X believe in himself more"*** Asked what he likes most about school, a young person responded, ***"making new friends and now liking maths. Reading, learning new things and taking part in projects"***.

A birth parent, in a Parent and Child placement, commented how the Foster Parent has ***"made me feel so confident in myself and to care for G. I shall ever be grateful for her help and support,... for advising me on things and making sure I'm caring for G properly and also for being there for me."***

A Local Authority Social Worker commented on a Parent and Child Foster Parent, ***"K has supported mum to develop her skills including, healthy eating, stimulation, and safety issues. She has also offered mum advice on manage occasions and talked to her about the consequences of her actions. K has always prioritised (the baby) and has developed a loving relationship with him which ensured that he had the love, attention, and emotional warmth that he required."***

## **ii. Safeguarding Procedures**

Family Fostering Partners' Safeguarding Procedures lay down a clear format for the reporting of any child protection matter to the appropriate people. The overriding aim of the use of the guidelines and procedures is always to ensure the protection of children.

In addition to this, we use the 'Safer Recruitment' principles for recruitment and selection of staff. We have an Office Administrator who is responsible for the co-ordination of DBS checks, local authority checks, references, and all employment safeguards.



## 5. How we Recruit, Approve and Train our Foster Parents

### i. The Recruitment Process

We are committed to recruiting of a diverse group of Foster Parents who can meet the needs of children and young people who are placed with the agency. To achieve the best outcomes for children in care, we believe that **who** we recruit as Foster Parents is at least as important as the training, support, and supervision we provide to Foster Parents once they are approved. This makes the recruitment and assessment processes crucial to us. Prospective Foster Parents have the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and young people have the right to assume that Family Fostering Partners is committed to the recruitment and approval of Foster Parents who can provide a high standard of care.

All prospective Foster Parents who make an enquiry are subject to rigorous assessment and vetting procedures. This includes the following:

#### a) An Initial Enquiry

Following an enquiry and the sharing of an information pack with a potential Foster Parent(s), the Agency undertakes a telephone call where information is gathered from the potential applicant(s) and similarly, information is shared about how we do things at Family Fostering Partners and the standards we set for ourselves and our foster parents. If the telephone call is positive and there is a match between our values and requirements, and those of the potential Foster Parent(s), then they are invited to proceed to an initial visit.

#### b) An Initial Visit

An initial visit takes place in the home of the prospective Foster Parent(s). Whenever possible, two staff from Family Fostering Partners complete the initial visit together because we believe that this gives us a balanced view on the strengths and areas for development for the potential Foster Parent(s). If that visit is successful, and both parties wish to proceed, the applicant(s) is invited to complete an application form.

#### c) Application Paperwork

The prospective Foster Parent(s) must complete an **Application Form** which gives detailed information about them and their families. This includes each person giving written consent to carry out the necessary checks and enquiries to ascertain their suitability to foster.

These **Statutory Checks and References** include:

- Enhanced DBS checks on applicants and each adult member of the household
- Identity Checks and verification of personal history
- Overseas check (where appropriate)
- At least 2 personal referees and a family member referee who will provide written references and will also be interviewed (unless the applicants are currently fostering)
- Previous partner references (if applicable and appropriate)
- References and interviews with adult children (if applicable and appropriate)
- References and/or Interviews with applicants' own children under the age of 18 living in the prospective foster home, or living with ex-partners (where appropriate)
- School and nursery reference (where appropriate)
- Medical Assessment
- Enquiries to the Local Authority in the area where the applicants currently live (and previous local authority checks since the age of 18)
- A health and safety assessment of the family home including a fire evacuation plan
- A financial assessment
- Current employment references
- References from all previous employment and volunteer roles involving children and vulnerable adults
- Current or previous fostering organisation references
- Pet and/or Dog Assessment

## ii. The Assessment Process

A qualified Social Worker is appointed to complete a competency-based assessment of all applicants, using the [Coram BAAF Form F](#).

The Form F is primarily about identifying whether an applicant or applicants are suitable to be approved as Foster Parents, to determine the kind of fostering for which they are suitable, and to consider any terms of approval. The form offers a structure for supplying evidence about these matters to fostering panels and to fostering service decision-maker. A subsidiary purpose is to capture the work that has been done with applicants to prepare them for the task of fostering and to identify the kinds of support that they might need.

The Form F is a detailed document which examines the applicant's motivation to be a Foster Parent; their capabilities and individual skills; the feelings, views, and involvement of all household members, (including applicant's children who may live away from the home); any existing demands being made

on the applicant, and recommendations in terms of matching alongside the family. The assessment is a joint project and requires full participation from the applicants and their family. The assessment process serves to prepare the applicant for fostering and identify the individual support they might need.

The process that Family Fostering partners follows for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two stages. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information required for Stage 1 must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received.

If during Stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the IRM, nor to make representations to Family Fostering Partners. However, if in Stage 2 a decision is made that the applicant is not suitable to foster then a brief report must be completed, the applicant advised, and their comments sought within 10 working days. After the 10 days or following receipt of the applicants' comments - whichever is sooner, Family Fostering Partners must send the report, any comments from the applicant and any other relevant information to the fostering panel. The applicant may, within 28 days, seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to Family Fostering Partners.

All information obtained about prospective Foster Parents is held on file in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. Upon request some of this information can be viewed. References from external agencies and personal references, which are given in confidence, cannot be accessed without the consent of both the subject and the relevant referees.

The assessment process includes an average of 8 - 10 home visits to the applicants, and interviews with the applicants; with household members; with birth children and with referees. Throughout the assessment process applicants are helped to gather information that provides evidence of skills and experiences that are relevant to fostering.

Attendance on a **Skills to Foster** course is mandatory for all new applicants to enhance their understanding of the fostering task; to introduce them to the care standards expected by the agency and to confirm the support and training from Family Fostering Partners which will be available to assist them as they develop their skills and experience. Our Skills to Foster course is an important part of the assessment process and is underpinned by the Secure Base Model. During the course we cover

- The role of foster parents

- Trauma informed care
- Working with others and managing change
- Risk Management and Safer caring

When the Form F is completed, applicants can read the report and discuss amendments. The Form F and supporting documents are presented to Family Fostering Partners' Fostering Panel. The Panel will use the Form F as a basis for evaluating the applicant's suitability to foster, alongside discussion with the assessing social worker and the applicants themselves. Applicants are always expected to attend Panel unless circumstances dictate that a video link is used.

The Panel makes recommendations to the agency whether a person is appropriate to act as a Foster Parent, and where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend the terms on which the approval is given, giving reasons for these recommendations.

The assessment process takes between 4 and 6 months, and every effort is made to ensure there is no avoidable delay.

All information obtained about prospective Foster Parents is held on file and stored electronically in accordance with The Fostering Services Regulations and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).

All information obtained about prospective Foster Parents is held on file and stored electronically in accordance with The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).

### iii The Fostering Panel

Our Panel comprises of an **Independent Chair** and a **Vice Chair** along with independent and agency Panel Members from a variety of appropriate backgrounds and experience. Family Fostering Partners has a central list of people who may be called upon to sit on the agency's fostering Panel, comprising of agency and independent members.

The agency **Panel Advisor** is the Head of Fostering, and our **Independent Members** include Foster Parent representatives, health and education representatives, a family court magistrate, parenting support officer and agency social work representatives, and a care experienced Panel member. The

chair of our Panel is an independent social worker with over 30 years post qualifying experience which includes extensive experience in fostering.

Each member of the **Fostering Panel Central List** has an Enhanced DBS and references. All Panel members receive an induction and ongoing regular training, guidance, and support from the agency, and are subject to annual appraisals. The agency produces an **Annual Report** on Panel function, and a review of Panel business during the year.

Our Panel members share our values and ethos, and this is reflected in members comments about the agency.

When asked what they like about working for this company Panel members said

- *“The ethos from the staff of putting the welfare of the child first in their minds is obvious in their reports, this reflects their professionalism, their understanding of the complexity of children in the care sector, and seeing children placed with families who genuinely want to do so for the right reasons, being part of a system and organization that wants to help and support the vulnerable child or children and place them in as far it is possible in a safe and caring family environment, hopefully to improve the child’s well-being and have a positive impact on him or her regardless of background, age, or other diverse factors”.*
- *“The total professionalism and dedication of the FFP team is to be commended. I have learnt a great deal working with you and I believe it has made me a more effective foster carer.”*

Every Panel is documented by the **Panel Administrator** who prepares the minutes in which the discussion by Panel members, the reasons for recommendations and any disagreements or dissent will be fully recorded. Completed Panel minutes will be checked firstly by the Panel Adviser, and then the minutes will be sent electronically to the Chair for approval of their accuracy.

The agency will endeavour to adhere to the following timescales:

- 2 working days – for Panel minutes to be completed by the Panel Administrator
- 1 working day – for the Panel Adviser to check minutes
- 2 working days - for the Chair to verify minutes

Verified panel minutes are then be submitted to the **Agency Decision Maker**, who is the Responsible Individual for Family Fostering Partners.

The Foster Parent, or prospective Foster Parent, is informed verbally of the decision-makers decision by their link worker, or in their absence, the Fostering Manager, within 1 working day of the decision

being made. Written confirmation of the decision is sent by the Panel administrator within five working days.

Should the agency not recommend approval/reapproval, then the applicant/foster parent is written to, outlining reasons for this decision, and provided with information regarding their right to appeal, including how to access the **Independent Review Mechanism**.

A **Panel Guide** is made available for Foster Parents and for applicants. The agency has produced a video guide to bring the Panel process and members alive to applicants and for the foster parents attending.

Our Fostering Panels in Wales are held at our office in Cross Hands; however, we also offer a live video link facility for any applicants who are unable to attend Panel, for example, due to distance (being more than an hour's drive away), disability, illness, or exceptional family circumstances. Panels can also be held fully online when necessary, using Microsoft Teams.

All successful applicants are provided with a Foster Parent Agreement, confirming their appointment as an agency Foster Parent. The agreement gives details about their terms of approval, and outlines expectations of both Foster Parent and agency.

## 6. How we Learn and Improve

### i. Our Training

We know from experience how complex and demanding it is to be a Foster Parent and how important personal development is for the role. Family Fostering Partners uses a comprehensive training programme to ensure that our foster parents develop the skills required look after the children in their care. Whether a foster parent is new to fostering or has been a foster parent for years, you never stop learning. We deliver training using a blended method, combining in person face-to-face learning, online, and e learning and webinars. This offers our fostering families flexibility and is also sensitive to different learning styles.

We deliver our training in several different ways:

- Foundation Training Programme delivered by Family Fostering Partners' Learning and Development officer, and by external trainers
- E-Learning and Webinars
- Specialised training courses commissioned from independent providers.
- One to one learning and support opportunities provided through Foster Parents' Link Workers supervision.

Family Fostering Partners Training Policy sets out our expectations around learning and development, and all Foster Parents and staff have a Personal Development Plan. This plan is discussed monthly in supervision, and formally reviewed annually.

Our training programme ensures that all Foster Parents receive relevant induction and continued professional development.

Training is provided to

- Safeguard children and young people .
- Safeguard Foster Parents.
- Support Foster Parents and staff at becoming better at their job
- Improve knowledge and skills.
- Establish values and working practices which reflect the ethos and culture of Family Fostering Partners and promote equality of opportunity.
- Encourage Foster Parents to take responsibility for their own professional development through the creation of individual training profiles.

### Pre-approval

The training provided prior to panel explores and reinforces the applicant's suitability for the foster caring role and ensures that the Family Fostering Partners standards of care are fully understood.

All new Foster Parents attend a specifically tailored learning and development programme during their assessment, called Skills to Foster.

This programme is delivered by experienced Family Fostering Partners staff in conjunction, whenever possible, with an experienced Foster Parent. The course is essential to ensure participants fully understand the agency's expectations, particularly the expectations and demands of caring for vulnerable children and of providing a professional service to the Local Authority. All Foster Parents under assessment as appropriate will have access to other relevant training identified. This means that they co-train with the agency's existing approved parents and begin to form links with their peers and with the agency.

### Post approval

Following assessment and approval all Foster Parents receive a thorough **induction**. This includes ensuring that foster parents are clear about the policies and procedures, including Safeguarding/Child Protection, Safer Caring and health and safety. Induction also includes the following areas:

- Working with Family Fostering Partners
- Support and Supervision
- Training and development
- Referring and matching
- Administrative requirements and Finance

All newly approved Foster Parents are given a Training and Development Portfolio in which to evidence their learning and professional development. Routine review of this forms occurs as part of Foster Parent monthly supervision and the Foster Parent's annual review.

Family Fostering Partners offers Foster Parents a wide range of group training opportunities utilising a mix of "in house" and external training providers, supplemented with a e-learning programme for those who wish to undertake this. Foster Parents are expected to follow a core curriculum, which is clearly linked to:



- The Welsh Induction Standards
- Key findings from research, government guidance and examples of best practice.

Family Fostering Partners provides a bespoke training course for Foster Parents who choose to develop their skills around Parent and Child fostering. The course enables the development of assessment skills; promotes a comprehensive understanding of baby and toddler development; emphasises the importance of attachment for a secure base; and provides specific guidance on detailed recording and report writing.

As an agency, Family Fostering Partners uses a Secure Base Model approach in working with Foster Parents and Looked After children. Its importance as a framework for understanding trauma and for helping children recover from adverse experiences is emphasised on the preparatory Skills to Foster course as well as in all post approval training. The secure base model gives a better understanding of the attachment issues enabling them to manage major emotional or behavioural crisis. It also considers how children's relationship with Foster Parents can enable the child/young person to develop competence in the outside world and manage often complex relationships with birth family members.

Examples of training include:

Being Healthy	Staying Safe	Enjoying and Achieving	Making a Positive Contribution
Paediatric First Aid	Safeguarding	Sibling Relationships	Equality and Diversity
Gro Brain	Safe Handling and De-escalation	Trauma and Behaviour	Promoting Identity and Self-esteem
Attachment Level 2 and 3	Child Sexual Exploitation	Understanding Transitions	Promoting Family Time
Child Development	Social Media and Internet Safety	Education for Children Looked After	Gypsie and Traveller Families
Drug and Alcohol Awareness	Recording and Safe Care	Childhood in a Digital Age	Child refuges and asylum seekers
Disability Awareness	Child Criminal Exploitation	Placement endings	
Teenage Brain	Missing from Care		
	Managing allegations		

Internal training is delivered by a dedicated Training Manager. In line with our ethos of delivering services to foster families in patch based geographical areas, face to face training programmes are

delivered locally in the areas where our foster family groupings live, using community centers and local venues. Training in small 'fostering communities' allows foster parents to better develop relationships with one another, friendships, and peer support networks. For many, this makes the training experience less daunting, especially since for many people who embark on fostering careers, training is not something they may be used to.

## 7. Facilities and Services

### i. How we securely store records

As an agency that works with vulnerable children and young people, Family Fostering Partners takes data protection very seriously and is committed to protecting and respecting privacy and confidentiality.

Family Fostering Partners maintains records in accordance with Regulation 39 and Schedule 2 of the Regulated Fostering Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Agency has a Data Policy which offers further guidance on this issue.

We believe that everyone has rights with regards to the way in which personal information is handled and should be able to expect that any data shared with Family Fostering Partners is treated correctly and lawfully. When processing data we comply with the principles of good practice which provides that information must be

- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- Processed for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- Is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary
- Is correct, kept up to date and held for no longer than is necessary
- Processed in a manner that ensures proper security

To this end, we have systems and processes in place to manage data security, including IT systems that are cloud based and protected with passwords and anti-virus software and a database which complies with ISO standards.

All approved Foster Parents must sign a Foster Parent Agreement which outlines the agency's expectations about confidentiality, and training is provided at the pre-approval stage to ensure this is understood.

Family Fostering Partners maintains the records held on Foster Parents and on children and young people in accordance with the requirements of the Fostering Regulations and Guidance. This means that

- Records are accurate, up to date and held securely

- Records of each approved Foster Parent are held for no less than 15 years after the termination of approval
- When children and young people move on from a Family Fostering Partners foster home, all records provided by the LA and relating to that child, will be offered back to the placing Local Authority. If these documents are not required by the placing Local Authority, then we will securely remove the information from our database six months following the date of the placement end.
- Records will be made available to the Welsh Ministers on request
- Children who use our service are made aware of their right to access their records, and to have such access to their records as is allowed by the placing Local Authority

#### **i. How we meet with people using the service**

Children have the right to a voice, and for their opinion to be heard and valued on matters that affect them. Listening to children and young people is something that Family Fostering Partners takes very seriously, with their feedback used to shape and improve the services offered.

The agency offers a range of opportunities for children and young people to participate and engage. These include.

- Consultation with Children Looked After and the Foster Parent s own birth children routinely used to inform the Foster Parent 's Annual Review.
- Home visits that provide a regular opportunity for Family Fostering Partners' Link Workers to see children and young people on their own and ascertain their satisfaction with their placement.
- Activity events, in person and online, run by the agency to provide staff with an additional opportunity to speak directly with children and young people.
- Online surveys
- Partnership working with young people, supporting them to be actively involved in their care planning process, listening to their views and what matters to them.
- Link Workers and Foster Parents encouraging and supporting young people to attend their Child Looked After (CLA) reviews and participate as best they can, which may include making a referral to an Advocacy Service if requested or if it is felt appropriate.
- All children are presented with an age-appropriate version of the agency's Children's Guide/Young Person's Handbook that has details of who to contact if they are unhappy about any element of their care.

- Young people are also supported to complete an annual 'Survey Monkey' delivered by the 4C's (Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru) as part of an annual quality audit of independent agencies supplying placements to children on the 4C's Framework.
- Foster Parents who are trained and supported to advocate on a child's behalf should a child or young person be dissatisfied with any aspect of their care plan.

## ii. How we meet with Staff and Foster Parents

To ensure that communication within and across the agency is of the highest possible standard and to ensure ongoing consultation and feedback from both staff and parents, Family Fostering Partners holds fortnightly all staff meetings and bi-monthly in person foster parent support groups.

The staff meetings are chaired by a Fostering Manager and attended on a regular basis by the Head of Fostering and the Responsible Individual. Practice issues are discussed including any case management issues which may present on call. The Responsible Individual also leads on sharing with the staff team any strategic development plans.

Support groups are facilitated by the Link Workers and attended by agency staff, including whenever possible the Responsible Individual. In addition to monthly Foster Parent support groups there is a closed foster parent facebook group for each area.

We also have a Foster Parent Focus groups which are led by the Training and Recruitment Manager. Groups meet to look at specific issues that impact on foster parents both from within the agency and externally. These forums provide the agency with a steer on the views and opinions of our wider cohort of foster parents and links in to the Support Groups to ensure information is disseminated and shared.

## 8. Governance and Quality Monitoring arrangements

### i. The Responsible Individual

At Family Fostering Partners we believe that a positive culture within the agency, which in turn ensures the best possible outcomes for individuals, can only be achieved through strong and supportive leadership. To this end, the Responsible Individual plays a key role in setting the ethos for the agency and for promoting high practice standards for all staff and parents.

The Responsible Individual is based at the agency's office in Cross Hands making her a familiar figure who is easily accessible to staff, parents, and young people in placement. Along with the Head of Fostering and the Fostering Manager, the Responsible Individual takes part in a management rota providing Link Workers with 2<sup>nd</sup> tier management support for on call. This means that the Responsible individual has an in-depth knowledge of all the agency's parents and of the children and young people in the agency's care.

In addition to being well informed of the day to day running of the agency, the Responsible Individual attends staff team meetings, and visits Foster Parent support groups on a regular basis. This provides her with an ongoing opportunity to maintain an oversight of management, and to respond to any issues. She is a familiar figure to all who are associated with Family Fostering Partners.

The Responsible Individual also has monitoring processes in place to ensure that the quality and safety of the service is maintained. These monitoring processes include

- Having line management responsibility for the Head of Fostering
- Involvement in the staff recruitment process
- Oversight of the work of the Fostering Panel and the Annual Panel Report
- Monitoring of placement disruptions, compliments, and complaints
- Monitoring of staff supervision, appraisals, and frequency of file audits
- Feedback and reports of Inspections by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
- Collation of views or comments expressed by parents and other professionals and/or through the statutory Reviews of children in placement
- Monitoring of Foster Parent Reviews, including the comments and views collated from parents, other professionals, the children in placement and/or their representatives
- Monthly all staff, placement monitoring meetings
- The production of a bi-annual Quality of Care Report
- Quarterly reporting to the Board of Directors on the quality of care

### **i. Foster Parents' Policies and Procedures**

Once approved, Family Fostering Partners Foster Parents are provided with access to online resources, a suite of policies and procedures to provide information and guidance to all our foster parents on fostering issues. These also provide additional sources of information, provide practical help, identify standards of care that are expected from foster parents, and in return what they can expect from the agency. Foster parents should view these as a framework for their role and working with the Fostering Service. This suite provides a comprehensive guide of up to date policies and procedures in relation to the fostering task which are reviewed and updated regularly.

### **ii. Foster Parents' Annual Review**

For all reviews, a full report is prepared by the agency Link Worker and contributions from the child or young person currently in placement are sought, alongside the view of the child's Local Authority Social Worker; the child's school/nursery or other education provision; any other professional involved with the child, and if appropriate from birth parents or other significant birth or foster parent family members. The views of anyone placed within the fostering household within the preceding year will also be sought, as will the views of any birth children in the household.

The Annual Review provides an opportunity for the agency and Foster Parent to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead. It takes account of:

- Recommendations of the previous review.
- Enquiries made, and information obtained by the agency.
- Outcomes for children placed in this household since the last review.
- Any significant changes in the household including to accommodation.
- Training undertaken by the foster parent and support given.
- The views of the Foster Parent and all members of the household including children who are/have been placed during this period.
- The views of placing authorities.
- The views of birth children.
- The views of family members of the child or children placed.
- Updates on all statutory checks.
- Annual updates on Health and Safety checks.
- Any concerns, complaints, or compliments.

### iii. Post approval Support and Supervision

Every Foster Parent approved by the agency has an allocated Link Worker who is experienced and skilled in delivering high standards of care and assistance. Caseloads are kept manageable to ensure that worker has sufficient capacity to provide an appropriate level of visiting and support to the foster parent, and lines of work are monitored by the Fostering Manager through formal staff supervision and informal discussion. Regularly team meetings and Link Worker reflection meetings are also held.

Foster Parents, staff and Panel members are all provided with appropriate training to fulfil their roles and this is monitored via foster parent monthly supervision and annual reviews, staff supervision and appraisals, and Panel member appraisal.

Asked how they feel about the support Foster Parents receive from their Link worker and the agency Foster Parents have said.

- *"X is great in providing for all my needs in my role as a foster carer, always positive, and helpful, I feel I can offload to her when at times my emotions are high"*
- *"X is excellent. She has really supported and assisted me with issues with my young man."*
- *"They (FFP) are always there for me and gave a lot of encouragement at the beginning when we were struggling. This Foster Parent describes using the training she has received "to understand their (child's) needs and feelings, and to hopefully help them feel better about themselves."*
- *"I feel myself and Y have a good relationship based on being honest and open, and importantly being able to have a sense of humour, particularly during the challenging times. I always feel confident during meetings etc that she will step in if needed, if I were to feel under pressure in any way or even just tongue tied."*
- *"Very happy. Y has always been there with support, advice, and guidance whenever it is needed. All other staff are always very supportive and helpful. We have always had full support at professional meetings and home visits. Nothing is too much trouble"*.

Our Staff also feel well valued and supported.

- *Over the last year I feel I have grown and gained in confidence in my role as Link worker and have become more confident in my ability and my professional judgements. I believe FFP has a significant number of opportunities and potential for the future which will further benefit my professional development as well as enjoyment within the role.*
- *There isn't anything that I dislike about working for the company.*



- *I have thoroughly enjoyed working for FFP. I have felt that my skills, knowledge, and experience have been taken into account and my role and responsibilities have adapted to complement these. I feel that I have been adequately supported to grow and develop my specific fostering knowledge and have been reassured that any uncertainties, worries or concerns I have had, have been supported effectively. My hard work has been recognized, appreciated, and rewarded which in turn has reinforced my morale and commitment to the agency.*
- *I continue to be very much aligned to the agency's ethos and am committed to helping the agency grow and develop over the coming years.*

Health and Safety within foster homes; including having appropriate documents and insurance in place, is monitored during foster parent supervision and annual review, with remedial action taken to address any issues of concern.

#### **iv. How we deal with complaints**

Family Fostering Partners recognises that customer feedback and stakeholder views are important, and we have several mechanisms and procedures in place for service users to provide feedback and/or to make a complaint. Our Complaints procedure is made available to service users via the Children and Young People's Guides, and to Foster Parents via our online data base. Local Authority customers, parents or other interested parties are provided with a copy on request. The procedure is reviewed annually to monitor its satisfactory operation, and any child or young person who wishes to make a complaint or raise a concern is supported to do so.

Any, and all complaints received by Family Fostering Partners are treated as serious matters, but also as opportunities to learn and improve the level of service provided. We use complaints to reflect on our practice; take appropriate action to change policies and procedures; and to prevent future occurrence. Family Fostering Partners also has a whistleblowing policy in place and a copy of this is available to all staff and Foster Parents and can be made available on request to any other stakeholders.

Our policies and procedures have been developed to respond to issues raised by:

- The Local Authority
- Any child who is being looked after by Family Fostering Partners, or a person acting on behalf of the child.
- A child's parent, or person with parental responsibility.

- Any Family Fostering Partners Foster Parent or family member.
- Any Family Fostering Partners staff member.
- Such other person as Family Fostering Partners considers has sufficient interest in the child's welfare to warrant his or her representations being considered by them.

Complaints can be made about

- A specific problem
- The quality of service
- The delivery or non-delivery of a service
- The way in which the agency carries out its policies and practices.

All serious complaints are notified to the appropriate Regulatory Authority.

**Stage 1: Informal Stage - We** have a comprehensive complaints procedure which places an emphasis on resolving complaints at a local level and at an early stage (Stage 1), but Family Fostering Partners recognises there may be times when matters cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

**Stage 2: Formal Investigation-** If the problem is considered too serious for an informal approach, or if the complainant is not satisfied with the response they get at the informal level, they can complain formally at any time, to Family Fostering Partners and to the Head of Fostering who is the Complaints Officer, at the address below. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within 7 working days, including an indication of who the identified Investigating Officer will be.

**The Complaints Officer** (Head of Fostering)

Office 1,  
Block B,  
Llys Y Barcud,  
Cross Hands,  
Carmarthenshire  
SA14 6RX

Complaints at Stage 2 are managed through an investigation conducted by an Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer may be an experienced manager, identified from within Family Fostering Partners, who has had no previous involvement with the matter concerned, or an external contracted individual with relevant qualifications and experience. Any such appointment will be made known to and discussed with all parties prior to the commencement of the investigation. In appropriate circumstances a child's Local Authority Social Worker will be informed of the complaint and of the progress of the investigation and outcome. No one who is the subject of, or who has been involved in

seeking to resolve the complaint informally (Stage 1) will be responsible for any investigation conducted under Stage 2.

The Complaints Officer will ensure the complaint is properly investigated. At this stage, the investigation should be completed, and the response sent to the complainant, ideally within 25 working days. However, this may be impractical in some cases, for example, where the complaint involves several agencies; if all or some of the matters are the subject of a concurrent investigation (such as a disciplinary process); if the complaint is particularly complicated, or if a key witness is unavailable for part of the time.

Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 25 working days of the commencement of the investigation, Stage 2 may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. Where a response in 25 working days is not feasible, we will inform the complainant as soon as possible in writing of:

- the reason for the delay.
- and the date by which a response should be received

The outcome of a complaint, including findings and recommendations for the resolution of the complaint, will be sent, in writing, to the complainant, and details of the next steps should the complainant not be satisfied with the response.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, they may request that the matter be referred to Stage 3 for a Complaints Review Panel to be established to consider the complaint investigation and its findings.

**Stage 3, Complaints Review Panel** - A request to convene a Complaints Review Panel must be made in writing to the Complaints Officer, who is the Service Manager, and received within 28 days of the complainant receiving the outcome in writing of the Stage 2 formal investigation. The request will be acknowledged in writing within 7 days.

The Panel will consist of a Family Fostering Partners Director, another senior Family Fostering Partners manager who has no connection with the complaint, and someone who is independent of Family Fostering Partners, that is, a person with a relevant background and expertise who is not an employee of Family Fostering Partners. The Review Panel will not reinvestigate the complaint, nor will it be able to consider any substantively new complaints that have not been first considered at Stage 2

Complaint Review Panels are designed to:

- Listen to all parties.
- Consider the adequacy of the Stage 2 investigation.
- Obtain any further information and advice that may help resolve the complaint to all parties' satisfaction.
- Focus on achieving resolution for the complainant by clearly addressing the defined complaints and desired outcomes.
- Reach findings on each of the complaints being reviewed.
- Make recommendations that provide practical remedies and creative solutions to complex situations.
- Support local solutions where the opportunity for resolution between the complainant and the organisation exist.
- Identify any consequent injustice to the complainant where complaints are upheld, and to recommend appropriate redress; and
- Recommend any service improvements for action by the organisation.

The venue, date and time of the complaints review panel meeting will be agreed with the complainant, and the procedure and background documentation will be circulated to all parties.

The complainant makes their representations to the panel and has the right to bring a representative to the panel to speak on their behalf. After the Panel, a full written response will be provided to the complainant, (and other participants as necessary), ideally within 10 working days.

The outcome of the Complaints Review Panel is a final response from Family Fostering Partners. If the complainant is not happy with the final outcome, or indeed at any stage of the process, they can contact CIW. Complainants can also go directly to CIW at any time if they believe any aspect of our service delivery does not comply with regulations or falls below the standards required. CIW can be contacted at any of these addresses:

**Government Buildings,**

Picton Terrace,  
Carmarthen,  
SA31 3BT

**Welsh Government Office,**

Rhydycar Business Park,  
Merthyr Tydfil,  
CF48 1UZ  
**Welsh Government Office,**  
Sarn Mynach,  
Llandudno Junction,  
LL31 9RZ  
Tel: 0300 790 0126

E mail: [CIW@gov.wales](mailto:CIW@gov.wales)

Web: <https://careinspectorate.wales>

Alternatively, a Foster Parent, child or young person may also choose to approach the Children's Commissioner for Wales who can be contacted at the following address.

**Children's Commissioner for Wales,**

Oystermouth House,  
Charter Court,  
Phoenix Way,  
Llansamlet,  
Swansea,  
SA7 9FS  
Tel : 01792 765600 / Fax : 01792 765601

**Freefone number for children and young people - 0808 801 1000**

**Text number for children and young people - 80 800 (starting their message with COM)**

**Email:** [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)

**Web:** <http://www.childcomwales.org.uk>

**v. How we consult with stakeholders to affect how our service is delivered and improved**

Staff have a high level of direct contact with the Foster Parents; children and young people who use our service; Foster Parents within parent and child placements; local authority social workers, and other professionals involved in our day-to-day business. This level of contact whether it be in person, by phone, through consultation document, or email, ensures that we are continually, as part of our

day-to-day business, consulting with stakeholders to affect how our service is delivered and can be improved.

Regular staff supervision and appraisal, combined with robust team meetings, ensure that we are continually evaluating our service to staff, and the work provided by our staff to our stakeholders and service users.

Our Fostering Panel provides another important quality assurance mechanism for the agency.

With those local authorities with whom we have several placements, the Fostering Manager meets with the local authority Commissioning Officer to discuss the stability of those children's placements. During these meetings, individual placement progress is discussed, along with the placement cost, which includes any opportunity for Family Fostering Partners as an agency to decrease costs to the Local Authority or to request additional services to promote the child's wellbeing. The continued suitability of the foster placement is evaluated in line with the child/young person's wellbeing outcomes and care plan. As an agency Family Fostering Partners also use these meetings to advise the Local Authority of any service or practice developments and to discuss carer vacancies and availability.

As an independent fostering provider on the Commissioning Consortium Cymru All Wales Fostering Framework (current ranked as a Tier 1 Provider), the Responsible Individual and Head of Fostering attend Partnership Forums facilitated by the Consortium. These events provide independent fostering providers and Local Authorities an opportunity to consult on how services are currently delivered and how this might be improved. The Head of Fostering and Responsible Individual both attend presentations, seminars, and workshops with an opportunity to discuss Family Fostering Partners' services and to identify any unmet service needs for Local Authorities.

The Responsible Individual meets Quarterly with the Board of Directors to provide an overview of the agency's quality of care and to agree the agency's strategic development and growth.