



# Worcestershire Children First **Independent Fostering Agency** Statement of Purpose 2021 - 2023

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## **Description**

Statement of Purpose to outline the services delivered under Worcestershire Children First Fostering Service.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Worcestershire Children's First (WCF) is an independent not for profit company which is wholly owned by Worcestershire County Council (WCC). Worcestershire Children First Fostering Agency (WCFF) sits within the company as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).

1.2 WCFF offers placements for children who are looked after by WCF on behalf of the Local Authority, WCC.

1.3 WCFF provides fostering placements including family and friends foster placements for looked after children and young people which safeguard and promote their welfare and enhances their life chances.

1.4 This Statement of Purpose will detail the aims and objectives of WCFF, set out its quality assurance mechanisms and the range of services provided to children, foster carers and family and friends carers.

1.5 The Statement of Purpose includes details of the staffing and organisational structure, management arrangements and complaints procedures.

1.6 The Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and is based on Standard 16 of The National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011. It is subject to formal approval by the Director of Children's Social Care, WCF.

## 2. Aims and objectives of Worcestershire Children First

2.1 Worcestershire Children First want Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up and our mission is to support children and young people to be happy, healthy, and safe. WCF value family life and we will support and empower parents to care for their own children well. WCF value good education for all children, will act in a professional and timely way to protect children from harm and will keep our children and young people at the heart of everything that we do.

2.2 The aims of WCFF are derived from WCF's vision for Children's Services in Worcestershire, "To make a positive impact on the lives of our children and young people aged 0 to 25years, and their families, by providing outstanding, innovative, child and young people-focused services where practice and practitioners flourish and we maximise life opportunities for all ".

**"Or more simply put to ensure children are happy, healthy and safe."**



2.3 WCF believes that children are best cared for in their own families and communities when it is safe to do so and will support parents to achieve this. Where this is not possible, it will strive to achieve the best outcomes for children who need to be looked after, ensuring they receive safe and effective care and an early return home wherever possible. Its aim is to enable children in care to become confident and able adults with the facility and capacity to be contributing members of society.

2.4 In putting the vision into practice, WCF works to the following principles:

- The paramount role of the Service is to ensure children in the care of the local authority in foster care placement are receiving high quality care that contributes to their care plan and promotes their welfare and safety.
- Carers and placements play an essential role in progressing a child's care plan and should contribute to timely permanence as set out in the child's care plan.
- There is a commitment to continuing improvement and we will use our quality assurance practice to ensure we know what we are doing, how well we are doing it and what impact it is having on the lives of children we care for.
- The Service will respect, value, and promote diversity and equality through the delivery of services to children, birth families, carers, and staff.
- Service users and stakeholders will be consulted, and their views will be taken into account in planning at an individual and Service level.
- There is a commitment to training for both staff and carers to ensure they are skilled and equipped to provide the best care for children and young people who may be experiencing the most difficult time of their life.

### 3. Aims of WCF Fostering Agency

3.1 We will provide a suitable fostering placement for every child that needs looking after from Worcestershire for whom it is deemed appropriate. Placements of children who need to be cared for by non-family members will be with carers who are well selected, prepared, supervised, and supported:

- To assess, facilitate and support a family and friends' placement where this is in the best interests of the child.
- To ensure children have an experience of family life, which promotes their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing and maximizes their life chances.
- To ensure teenagers are encouraged to learn independence skills at an appropriate level to support their transition to independence.
- To ensure that the fostering experience is a positive one for the children that need looking after and their families, supporting parental and birth family contact where it is in the interest of the child.
- To ensure foster carers feel valued, supported, and skilled for their role
- To deliver services in an efficient and effective manner and maximises outcomes within the resources available.

### 4. Maximizing life changes for Looked After Children

4.1 WCFF will work with WCF's Through Care Service, WCF Health and Wellbeing Team, the Virtual School, and all other professionals to ensure WCFF achieves its mission to make children and young people happy, healthy, and safe:

4.2 WCFF Agency recognises for children and young people to be happy and have a sense of wellbeing they need to be supported to enjoy and achieve in education and take part in leisure activities. This contributes to a positive sense of self and promotes resilience:

- WCFF will ensure that carers promote attendance at school and provide space and support for homework as necessary and celebrate their successes.
- WCFF will ensure that carers have a copy of a child's Personal Education Plans and are working to it.
- WCFF will work with the Virtual Head, schools, and other educational settings to monitor the progress of the children we look after
- WCFF Agency will provide training for carers on education and the education of traumatised children
- WCFF Agency will support young people as they make the transition to college and work. Foster carers will support them with career planning and ensure that they

have the knowledge, independence skills and equipment they need to make this a positive transition.

- Children and young people will be supported to take part in leisure activities and to pursue their interest.
- Carers will be provided with information on the Green Fingers project and leisure activities in their locality
- WCFE Agency will join with WCF to celebrate the achievements of our children and young people.

4.3 The agency has a holistic approach to health and focuses on the physical, emotional, and sexual health of children and young people:

- We will ensure that carers have all available information on the child's health when they are first placed
- We will work with the child's social worker and foster carers to ensure that children have health assessments in line with regulatory timescales, that children are registered with GPs, Opticians and Dentist and that foster carers follow up on any required treatment.
- We will ensure that foster carers keep health records for children they look after which can go with them if they move on
- We will provide training for carers which takes a holistic approach looking at attachment, resilience, and mental health as well as First Aid. This will include specialised training when required.
- We will promote access to Green Fingers; a National Lottery funded project that promotes healthy living through gardening and art activities for looked after children in Worcestershire
- We will work with Worcestershire Children First's Health and Wellbeing team to offer consultations and parenting support for carers with specialist workers such as clinical psychologists and a mental health practitioner.

4.4 Be Safe

- WCFE has safeguarding at the centre of its practice and seeks to provide placements in which children feel and are safe through:
- Staff recruitment practices will ensure that full and satisfactory information is obtained when appointed in line with Schedule 1 of the 2011 Fostering Regulations and the National Minimum Standards.
- WCFE will undertake robust assessments of foster carers and family and friends' carers
- We will undertake annual reviews of foster carers in timescale
- We will ensure that each child placed has an individual safer caring\risk

assessment policy. Strategies for managing risk will be proportionate and reviewed.

- We will provide training on Child Protection, Safer Caring and Worcestershire Children First's Get Smart programme.
- We will ensure that carers know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns or a child, they are caring for goes missing.
- We will work with the Team around the Child, including the child's Social Worker and IRO to ensure children are safe and will consult with the LADO as appropriate.

#### 4.5 Make a Positive Contribution

- Supporting children to make a positive contribution is a way of promoting a positive sense of self, resilience, and identity. We support children to make a positive contribution through:
  - Consultation with children and carers
  - Involvement of children and carers in the development of the service
  - Working with Worcestershire's Children in Care Councils.

#### 4.6 Achieve Economic Well-Being

- It is important to place children with carers who have the financial resources they need to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for. We achieve this through:
  - Foster carers receiving Foster Care Allowances in line with the minimum levels set by the Department of Education
  - WCCF's payment of skills scheme which is open to all foster carers
  - Additional payments for looked after children for festivals, birthdays, holidays, and clothing.

## 5. Equality and Diversity

### 5.1 Recruitment of Carers

WCCF welcomes applications to foster from people regardless of their culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. We work with members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities throughout the year and use their events such as Pride 2018, LGBT Fostering and Adoption week to actively recruit from these communities.

## 5.2 Black and Ethnic Minority Placements

WCFF seeks to recognise, value, and meet the cultural and religious needs of children coming into care. In our training and support to carers we will ensure carers have the understanding and basic skills to meet the diverse needs of children and young people they care for.

Where possible we will match a child's cultural and religious needs with their carer and where we are unable to match and decide to place trans-racially given other factors such as proximity to birth family or the child's local community, we would, provide extra support to the placement to ensure that the child's cultural and religious needs were met.

## 5.3 Children with Disabilities

The service seeks to place children with disabilities with carers who are able to meet their additional needs and will provide specialised training to ensure carers are able to meet their needs.

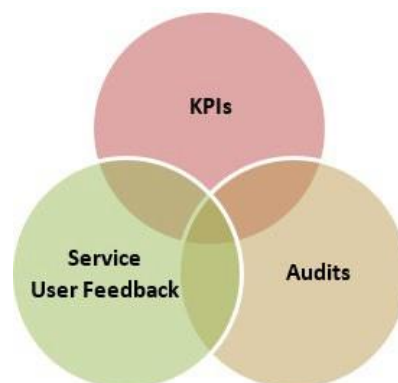
## 5.4 Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures of the service are subject to Equality Analysis to ensure they meet the requirements of the Equality Act.

# 6. Quality Assurance and Performance Management

## 6.1 How Do We Quality Assure Safeguarding Quality Assurance

WCFF has systems in place to Quality Assure our work, this is through Performance Information, Service User Feedback and Audits.



The following activities sit under the 3 headings which are in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure services provided are effective and the quality



of these services is of an appropriate standard.

## 6.2 Service User Feedback

- The views of children and young people are important to us. Children who are looked after by us will be asked to feedback to their foster carers' annual review. Children's views are sought directly by the fostering social worker speaking to the child/young person depending on the child's age and understanding and needs. If that is not possible or appropriate the child's Social Worker will be approached. Some children and young people prefer not to speak to a worker but will complete feedback forms themselves.
- Worcestershire Children First will provide feedback gathered by the child's Independent Reviewing Officer at the end of placement. WCFF will use this to feedback any learning to individual fostering households including discussing any training needs. It will also monitor whether there is any learning for the whole service.
- The agency has written information (children's guides) for children and young people to tell them about fostering services. This includes information on how to complain.
- Team Managers undertake audits which look at the lived experience of the child in the fostering household. Feedback is sought from foster carers as part of these audits. This focuses on their experience of supervision and support. This feedback is discussed with the carers supervising social worker and collated to look at learning and development for the service. General audits were done monthly. There are also targeted audits that are undertaken as and when requested.
- Children and young people living in any household we are assessing will be interviewed as part of the assessment and they will be asked to feed back to the foster carers' annual review.
- Carers, social workers, birth families and other members of the fostering household are asked to contribute to the foster carers' annual review. As well as providing individual feedback, this is reviewed to look for trends or patterns about service delivery.
- All carers are asked to provide feedback about the experience of attending fostering panel.
- Consolidation meetings are held and the information from these is reviewed so that trends or patterns can be identified. This information then becomes part of the improvement cycle for the service.
- All carers are advised of the agency's complaints and compliments procedures and given information about how to make a complaint. Learning from compliments and complaints is feedback into the service.
- WCFF will consult with the 'Children in Care Councils' on their experience of our services and any developments within the agency.

### 6.3 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Worcestershire Children First Fostering's development is monitored through the agency plan. The Responsible Individual/Registered Manager along with the Team Managers use information on KPIs to monitor performance.

KPIs will include:

- Quality of assessments and timescales
- Timeliness of visits to foster carers,
- Timeliness of foster carer supervision. Team Managers sign off all reports of foster carers supervision.
- Timeliness of annual reviews
- Unannounced visits
- All staff have regular supervision and an annual Staff Development Review. There is observation of social worker's practice by their manager twice a year.

The Fostering Panel has a quality assurance role for the agency. The Independent Chair meets with the Responsible Individual/Registered Manager. These meetings look at issues arising from panel and any actions needed to address these.

### 6.4 Audits

- Team Managers undertake audits which look at the lived experience of the child in the fostering household and the foster carers experience of the supervision and support they receive. Feedback is sought from foster carers as part of these audits.
- Themed audits will also be undertaken as required or when there are concerns about a particular area of practice.
- There is observation of social worker's practice by their manager twice a year. Feedback is given to social workers and any issues arising or learning is collated across the agency to look at the training and development needs of the staff.
- The Registered Manager produces a quarterly monitoring report which reviews recruitment, approvals, and areas to be monitor. These reports are presented to Worcestershire Children's First Board.

## 7. Management and Team Structure

### 7.1 Management Structure

#### 7.1.1 Appointed Responsible Individual Maria White

##### Qualifications:

- NAAS Practice Supervisor, 2019
- Post Qualifying Award in Social Work, 2000, CCETSW
- Diploma in Social Work, 1992, Cardiff University
- CQSW, 1992, Cardiff University
- BA Honours Sociology, 1987, North Staffordshire Polytechnic

##### Professional Membership:

- Registration with Social Work England

##### Experience:

Maria White is a qualified and registered Social Worker obtaining her CQSW and Diploma in Social Work from Cardiff University in 1992, holding posts of Social Worker and Senior Practitioner within local authority childcare teams within South Wales.

In 2002 she became a Staff Development Officer based within Wolverhampton Children's Services Training section specialising in the delivery of child protection training to Social Workers and Social Care staff.

In 2002 she took up a Safeguarding Team Manager post within Telford & Wrekin Council and remained in that post until moving into a Service Manager post for Assessment & Case Management within the same Council between 2009 – 2015. From 2015 - 2017, she held a Safeguarding Service Manager post in Shropshire Council and during that period was responsible for initial assessment, case management including Looked after Children, the Care Leavers Team, and the Children with Disabilities Team.

Maria White joined Worcester County Council in March 2017 as a Group Manager responsible for Safeguarding and Looked after Children Teams in the south of Worcester, became a Service Manager for Locality Safeguarding in August 2018 and is currently employed by Worcestershire Children's First as the Assistant Director for Locality Safeguarding, moving into this post on the 1st January 2019.

In 2021 Maria White was appointed Assistant Director; Permanency – Care Proceedings, Fostering & Adoption (Children's Social Care) for Worcestershire Children First. She also became Responsible Individual for the Permanency, Planning and Support Service covering adoption services within Worcestershire Children Services & Responsible Individual for Worcestershire Children First Fostering Service.

### 7.1.2 Appointed Responsible Manager

The WCCF Registered Manager Post is currently vacant, and recruitment to this post is in progress.

Registered Manager - Vacant
Name:
Position:
Company:
Address:
Email:
Contact Number:

The following RM Roles & Responsibilities will be overseen by the appointed Responsible Individual:

- ensure that this procedure is properly applied and implemented
- have oversight and management of individual cases, monitor the progress of cases, and ensure that they are dealt with in a timely, fair and consistent way.
- liaise with Human Resources where disciplinary action is required;
- ensure that risk assessments are undertaken where and when required;
- provide reports and information as required by the Responsible Individual;
- provide advice, information, training, and guidance for staff
- ensure relevant support is in place for staff, parents, and young people;
- ensure that children and young people know how to make a complaint or voice a concern.

Under the direction of the Responsible Individual the following RM Roles & Responsibilities will be overseen by:

Name:	Laurie-Mo Gullachsen
Position:	Fostering Manager ADM/Notifications
Company:	Worcestershire Children First
Address:	County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR5 2NP
Email:	<a href="mailto:lgullachsen@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk">lgullachsen@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk</a>
Contact Number:	01905 845509

- be the Designated Senior Manager within the agency to whom allegations or concerns are reported (Should they be absent or the subject of the allegation or concern then allegations or concerns should be reported to the Responsible Individual)
- gathering any additional information which may have a bearing on the allegation, for instance: previous concerns, care, and control incidents
- liaise with the LADO, Police, Children’s Social Care, and other agencies
- attend Strategy Meetings when required.
- provide the subject of the allegation with information as agreed with the LADO and advise them to inform their union, professional body or in the case of a foster carer, FosterTalk.org
- ensure that effective reporting and recording systems are in place which allow for

the tracking of allegations through to the outcome.

### **Laurie-Mo Gullachsen**

#### Qualifications:

- Social Work BSc (Hons) First Class, University of Gloucestershire 2007
- Post Graduate award in Children, young people, their families, and carers - Consolidation Module, University of Birmingham, 2012.
- Practice Educators award:
  - 'Enabling work-based learning' Bournemouth University, 2015
  - 'Supervising a learner in practice' Bournemouth University, 2016.

#### Management Qualifications:

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services - Children & Young People's Management (England)
- NAAS practice supervisor, 2019

#### Other Qualifications:

- Level 3 Award in Education and training, NOC 2016
- Infant Mental Health Online (IMHOL), University of Warwick, 2017

#### Professional Membership:

- Registration with SW07635
- Member of the Practice Assessor's Quality Assurance Panel at Heart of Worcestershire College
- Member of National Organisation of Practice Teaching England

#### Experience:

Laurie-Mo Gullachsen is a qualified and registered Social Worker obtaining her First- Class Bachelor's degree with honours in Social Work in 2007 from the University of Gloucestershire. Since that time, she has worked as a Social Worker for children across several settings and teams, including working in a Safeguarding role with Children and their Families before starting to work for Worcestershire County Council Children's Services as a Fostering Supervising Social worker in 2010. Laurie's experience includes working to recruit, assessment, approve, develop, and support foster carers in Mainstream and Kinship situations to care for Worcestershire's looked after children.

Within the Fostering Service Laurie has worked as a Supervising Social Worker until 2015 before being appointed as Advanced Social Work Practitioner supporting improving

practice across Safeguarding, Fostering and Kinship services. Since 2017 she has been a Fostering Team manager in both Mainstream and Kinship Fostering Teams and has been appointed as the Registered Manager for Worcestershire Children's Service Fostering and Kinship Service from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019.

During the period that WCFE does not have a Registered Manager, the Responsible Individual will assume or delegate under supervision aspects of the Registered Manager's role and responsibilities.

### 7.1.3 Team Structure

The Fostering and Kinship Service is comprised of 6 permanent teams:

**Two teams for Non-related Carers - These teams are responsible for:**

- Recruitment and assessment of non-related foster carers including Placement Plus
- Supervision and support of foster carers including annual reviews, post allegation reviews and support groups
- Management of the in-house placement service
- Family Finding
- Contributing to the training of foster carers
- Contributing to a daily duty system

**Three teams for Kinship Carers - These teams are responsible for:**

- Viability assessment on family members as part of care proceedings when children may not be able to live with their birth parents.
- Assessment of family and friends' carers
- Supervision and support of family and friends foster carers, including annual reviews, post allegation reviews and support groups
- Contributing to the training of foster carers
- Assessment of other family and friends' carers e.g., Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Orders and Private Fostering arrangements

**The Fostering Panel Team - This team is responsible for:**

- Facilitating panel meetings including managing all panel paperwork and recruiting and managing the pool of panel members
- Advising panel

- Collecting and providing panel data

The agency has a robust recruitment process with all references and checks being completed prior to staff starting. DBS checks are taken up prior to appointment and are renewed every 3 years. All managers and social workers in the agency are qualified and registered with the Health Professional Care Council.

Staff have a range of skills and experience in childcare, family placement and in recruitment, preparation, assessment, supervision, and support of carers.

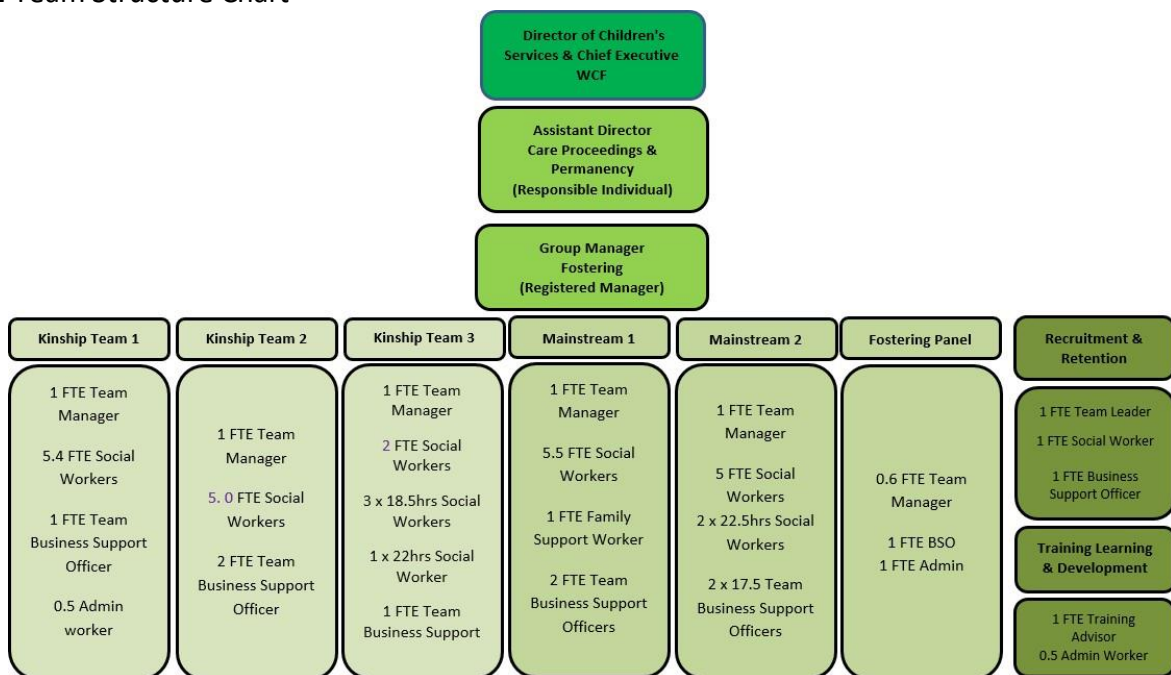
All social work staff have knowledge of fostering legislation and standards and family and friend’s statutory guidance.

The service is committed to continuous professional development and there is a range of training open to them through Worcestershire County Council's Social Work Academy.

The service also has a Learning and Development Officer who commissions and facilitates training for foster carers.

The agency has a Quality Assurance framework which includes feedback from those who use it services, file audits and observation of practice. It seeks to use learning from this framework and from compliments and complaints to develop and improve its services.

## 7.2 Team Structure Chart



## 8. Services Provided by WCF Agency

### 8.1 Recruitment and Assessment of Non-Related Carers

The recruitment of non-related foster carers is undertaken by the two non-related teams

in the agency assisted by the BSO for Recruitment. Recruitment is based on an analysis of need from which a recruitment strategy is developed. Pre-approval training is offered at least 6 times a year with additional courses provided to meet demand.

WCFF have a Recruitment & Retention Manager who works in partnership with the Registered Manager. The Recruitment and Retention Manager has a key responsibility in providing a Recruitment Strategy to ensure the fostering service has sufficient foster placements to meet the needs of Worcestershire Children First children in need of foster placements.

The Recruitment and Retention Manager supports the fostering service with the marketing recruitment of suitable fostering families and promotes the fostering service within the local community. In addition to this the manager has an active role in supporting with the retention existing foster carers, ensuring that approved foster carers are supported, heard, and valued by the fostering service.

The Recruitment and Retention Lead is supported by a specialist Business Support Officer.

The aim of our Recruitment and Marketing Strategy is to promote the service within the community, respond to enquiries within the first 24 hours and to review the current prospective carers enquiry to application journey and then application experience with Worcestershire Children First Fostering.

The Recruitment and Retention Lead in consultation with Team Managers in Worcestershire Children First Fostering takes lead responsibility for ensuring that the information being sent out to prospective foster carers is up-to-date and to ensure any information is relevant and reflective of the service provided. Another ongoing task will be to promote Worcestershire Children First Fostering using digital marketing and printed adverts in targeted areas or targeted professions to respond to the needs of the existing pool of carers and the varied needs of the children placed with them.

The Recruitment and Retention Lead is responsible for organising children's activities and support groups and ensuring that the Newsletter is completed and circulated.

Following the acceptance of an application, applicants are assessed using the evidence based BAAF form. For most applicants Stage 1 and Stage 2 are completed concurrently. A timescale of 16 weeks is set for these assessments. This is monitored and reasons for assessments falling outside this timescale noted.

## 8.2 Family and Friends Foster Carer

Following the Agency Decision Maker agreeing to a child being placed under Regulation 24 and the temporary approval of the family members as foster carers, the Kinship team will commence an assessment of the carers. The carers will sign a Foster Care Agreement and will be able to access the support services set out below, including financial support.



As set out in the regulations, the timescale for the assessment is 16 weeks. If this timescale is not achieved, a brief report will be presented to panel within the 16 weeks and the Agency Decision Maker, taking into consideration the views of panel, may agree an eight-week extension. The assessment will then be presented to panel within 24 weeks and the approval process as set out below will be followed.

The carers will only be expected to attend panel when the full assessment is presented.

If the recommendation of the panel following the full assessment is not to recommend approval, the carers will remain foster carers and continue to receive the appropriate levels of supervision and support pending the outcome of any appeal they may make, including an appeal to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism. Children will only be moved if they are assessed as being at immediate risk.

### 8.3 Approval of all Foster Carers (Non-Related and Family and Friends)

All completed assessments of applicants to foster, are considered by the independent Fostering Panel. The panel meets a minimum of three times a month and it is chaired independently. There is a central list of panel members. Containing a range of differing professionals, to include social workers, foster carers and those with health and educational backgrounds. Panel try and recruit a range of expertise in relation to child development and experience of working with children who have been looked after.

To ensure that the foster panel is quorate (5 members). There is always a chair or vice chair present, a social worker (with three years post qualifying experience) and three additional members.

It is expected that applicants will attend panel.

The panel's recommendations are made to the Agency Decision Maker. Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the outcome of their assessment and if approved are required to sign the Foster Carer Agreement.

There is a process of appeal if applicants are unhappy with the decision of the Agency Decision Maker and this information, including their right to go to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism, is explained to them in writing.

### 8.4 Supervision of Carers

All fostering households are allocated a supervising social worker who will:

- Have face to face contact with foster carers on a monthly basis unless agreed by the foster carers, fostering social worker and their line manager. The rationale for this would be noted on the carers file.
- Engage in supervision with the carers every three months which reviews how carers are meeting the needs of children placed with them as set out in the placement and

care plans.

- Annual Reviews are held. The first Annual Review must take place not more than a year after approval and thereafter when the fostering service considers it necessary but at intervals of not more than a year. The first review is presented to Foster Panel, subsequent annual reviews are presented to a fostering team manager who chairs a review meeting. In some circumstances an early review may need to be arranged and/or a subsequent review may need to be referred to Fostering Panel.
- Look at the support needs of carers and their households including access to support groups and their training needs
- Ensure that foster carers have the information they need to provide appropriate care to a child placed with them
- Encourage foster carers to participate in planning for the child.
- In the event of the foster carer's supervising social worker not being available, supervision and support needs will be managed by the Team Managers using other social workers in the team.
- Carers also have access to the Emergency Duty Team outside office hours.

## 8.5 Other Support to Carers

All approved foster carers will receive:

- Financial Support
- Foster Carer Handbook which contains the service's policies and procedures
- Practical support, including domestic help and ironing services where appropriate. Funding for Domestic support is agreed by The Registered Manager. It is dependent on need and where a foster placement may be under stress/risk of disrupting or child needs more one to one support to enable the foster carer to focus on the child.
- Regular team meetings/support
- Quarterly newsletter
- Membership of the Fostering Network and access to their Advice and Mediation Service.
- Access to respite
- Comprehensive Training Program

## 8.6 Learning and Development

Following approval there is a clear expectation that foster carers will complete the Training Support and Development Standards for foster carers within the expected timescale. This, along with completion of the induction training, is required for progression to Levels 2 and 3 of the agency's payment for skills scheme. The agency will assist carers in completing their Training, Support and Development Standards with the

assistance on a one-to-one basis using foster carers mentors.

The induction training courses that carers are expected to complete are:

- Managing Behaviour
- Safer caring
- Child protection
- First aid
- Contact
- Health & safety
- What is health?
- Valuing diversity

Developmental training is offered, and this includes courses on:

- Bereavement and loss
- Men in foster care
- Managing stress
- Education issues
- Attachment
- Trauma and resilience
- Emotional health of looked after children
- Child development
- Effects of adverse environment on developing children

Under the Payment for Skills Scheme foster carers must attend a minimum number of development courses to maintain Level 2 or 3.

WCFE recognises that family and friends foster carers may have specific training and support needs that may not be addressed in the support and training offered above. The service offers a pre-approval course for family and friends' carers, specific training courses on substance misuse and domestic abuse, workshops within training courses and to address the needs of family and friends foster carers.

WCFE together with WCF are working closely with Adoption Central England and the 4 other Local Authorities within the Consortium in establishing a Special Guardianship Strategy which will include an Information Leaflet & preparation training course specifically focused at becoming a Kinship Carer.

#### 8.7 Worcestershire Children First Anchor Emotional Health & Wellbeing Team

Worcestershire Children First Fostering Agency works closely with Anchor Health and Wellbeing Team when they are providing support to a child placed or to the foster carers, they form part of the team around that child.

WCFF works in partnership with Worcestershire Children First Health and Wellbeing Team. The team consists of social care and health professionals. The team works together with others involved with the child, to support carers to provide stable placements that promote positive relationships for the children and help to meet their needs.

The team is comprised of Social Workers, Clinical Psychologist, a Senior Mental Health Nurse, a Community and Leisure Worker, a Named Nurse for Looked After Children and specialist nurses for Looked After Children who undertake Health Assessments for school age children.

The Team offers telephone consultation or home visits to carers and can offer direct work/attachment focused therapeutic input where this is deemed appropriate upon referral, for children who have attachment difficulties as a result of their early childhood experiences or have experienced developmental trauma. In addition, the Team has link with CAMHS, and the Community and Leisure Worker provision provides signposting and provides information to foster carers on leisure activities for looked after children and deliver the Green Fingers Big Lottery Project.

## 8.8 Foster Carers Reviews

The Worcestershire Children First Fostering Panel undertakes reviews in the following circumstances:

- 8.8.1 First review following approval
- 8.8.2 Following a serious allegation and reassessment
- 8.8.3 Following any significant issue or occurrence
- 8.8.4 Major change to approval category

The first Annual Review must take place not more than a year after approval and thereafter when the fostering service considers it necessary but at intervals of not more than a year. The first review is presented to Foster Panel, subsequent annual reviews are presented to a fostering team manager who chairs a review meeting.

In some circumstances an early review may need to be arranged and/or a subsequent review may need to be referred to Fostering Panel.

Feedback is sought from the foster carers, the fostering social worker, foster carers' children, other adults in the fostering household, children in placement, birth families and social workers for any child in placement during the relevant period for all reviews. Written feedback from foster carers is completed through the foster carer report that foster carers complete as part of their annual review. Feedback from foster carers children/other children is either through the written feedback form that we provide which is part of the annual review paperwork or by speaking to the fostering social worker directly.

Minutes from all reviews are seen by the Registered Manager.

## 8.9 Placements

Worcestershire Children First have a Placement Team which sends Worcestershire Children First Fostering referrals for foster placements. Foster placement referrals are dealt with through the duty service staffed by Social Workers from the mainstream team on a rota basis. The purpose of fostering duty is to identify foster placements and support mainstream foster carers in times of crisis when their own social worker is unavailable. Fostering duty is working office hours. Worcestershire Children's Services, Emergency Duty Team support is then the duty support to carers and makes any placement outside of office hours.

WCFF provides the following types of placements:

- Short term or task centred foster carers who are able to take a same day or planned placement
- Long term placements providing permanency for a child
- Respite carers who take children placed with other carers or from birth families
- Parent and Child
- Contract Care Carers providing placements for teenagers with more challenging behaviour.
- Placement Plus carers who provide placement for young people with complex needs stepping down from or to prevent escalation to residential care. The Placement Plus scheme has additional support from a Family Support Worker and a clinical psychologist.

## 8.10 'Staying Put'

WCFF understands that some young people may remain with their carers after their eighteenth birthday under a Staying Put arrangement. 'Staying Put', is where children aged 18 -21 years can remain living with their ex foster carers through Staying Put legislation. This is overseen by Worcestershire Children First Care Leavers Team post 18 and is an arrangement that is set up between the Local Authority and foster carers and young adult. It is an arrangement that is put in place as part of Pathway Planning or children's living and support arrangements post 18.

# 9. Compliments, Comments and Complaints

9.1 For WCFF to develop its services effectively we need to understand the experiences of children and young people being looked after by us and their birth families. foster carers also need to have the opportunity to feedback to the agency on the level of supervision and support they receive.

## 9.2 Children and Young People

WCFF's children guides contain information for children and young people on how they can complement or make a complaint if they are unhappy with their experience in our care. This includes contact details for Ofsted. Worcestershire Children First (of which WCFF is a part) will provide a child or young person with an advocate if they need support to do this. The Children in Care Councils also provides a forum for collecting the views of children and young people to be feedback to Worcestershire Children First and WCFF.

9.3 Foster carers are advised on how to make a complaint and are given a copy of the complaints policy.

WCFF has a contract with the:

Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation service who will offer independent support to foster carers.

WCFF welcomes and encourages feedback, as this helps us to reflect on what our carers think of the services we provide and how we can improve them. Feedback can be made in writing, by e-mail, telephone or in person to any member of the team.

Information on how children and young people can make a compliment or complaint is in WCFF's Children's Guides. Information on how foster carers can make a compliment or complaint is in their Foster Carer Agreement and they will receive a copy of this policy on approval or on request

All compliments and complaints will be registered and monitored by the Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual.

## 10. Useful Contacts

10.1 Children and young people who are looked after or adults representing them can also contact The Office of the Children's Commissioner for advice about the services provide at:

The **Office of the Children's Commissioner**, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Tel: 0800 578 0731

or email [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

10.2 If a child, young person, their carer(s), or any member of the public is unhappy with the services provided they are also able to complain to:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## 11. Document Governance

11.1 This Statement of Purpose has been prepared by:

**Maria White** – Responsible Individual/Assistant Director Permanency

**This Statement of Purpose has been Approved by:**

**Maria White** (Responsible Individual) - Assistant Director Permanency – Care Proceedings, Fostering & Adoption (Children’s Social Care)

**SIGNED:**



**DATE:**

Updated 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023