

Children's Safeguarding & Family Support

Fostering Statement of Purpose

Policy Governance

Title	Fostering Statement of Purpose
Purpose/scope	To deliver the legal requirement of the Fostering Service (England) 2011 Regulations and associated guidance to provide information to stakeholders about the service provided, the principles and standards, aims and objectives, management structure and roles and responsibilities of the teams.
Subject key words	Foster Carer, Fostering, Statement of Purpose, Principles, Standards, Roles, Responsibilities, Teams, Placement, Assessment, Recruitment, Support, Supervision, Training.
Council Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and support our most vulnerable children and adults. • Put our children and young people first.
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Telford Fostering

Statement of Purpose

March 2023



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Statement of Purpose – Fostering Service

The Fostering Standards (16) requires that the fostering service have a clear Statement of Purpose, which is available to, and understood by foster carers, staff and children. It should be reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.

The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with the following legal and regulatory requirements:

- The Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- National Minimum Standards Fostering Services 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Standards Act (2000)
- The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations

1.2 The Statement of Purpose for Telford & Wrekin Council's Fostering Service has been compiled in accordance with Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) and includes:

- A statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service.
- A statement of the services and facilities provided by the fostering service.
- Assessment and approval of foster carers.
- Training and support for foster carers.

1.3 The Statement of Purpose can be found in the Council's Children's Services Procedures Manual online. It is made available and upon request, to:

- Ofsted
- Senior leaders in Telford & Wrekin responsible for managing the service.
- Any person working for the purpose of the fostering service.
- Children and young people in foster care (subject to age and understanding).
- Parents or any person with parental responsibility.
- Approved foster carers for Telford & Wrekin.
- Any placing authority of any child placed in Telford & Wrekin foster care.

1.4 The Statement of Purpose is subject to biannual review or sooner whenever staffing changes occur in the provision of the service.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Service

- 2.1 Telford & Wrekin fostering service's primary aim is to provide services to children, young people and families to promote the health, education and development of children in ways that meet the best interests of the child. For children looked after within our service, our aim is to ensure that they achieve their potential by providing and supporting safe, stable and positive experiences of care.
- 2.2 Telford & Wrekin believes that children are best cared for by their own family, where this is safe and appropriate. Where this is not possible, or not in the best interests of the child, we believe that children should be able to experience family life in a suitable family, on a temporary or permanent basis.
- 2.3 Our aim is to ensure that children feel safe and secure in their placements with carers who are appropriately trained, supported and capable of providing quality care to meet their needs and maximise their life chances by being aspirational and ambitious for them.
- 2.4 This will include ensuring that the child has a sense of identity, making the most of educational opportunities as well as ensuring the child is healthy, emotionally well and enjoys a network of social relationships within which the child feels valued.
- 2.5 Placement choice and the stability and effectiveness of foster care placements are fundamental to children's long-term life chances. The fostering service aims to provide and support appropriate family placements, either directly, or by commissioning services from other agencies to meet children and young people's assessed needs and also being sensitive to differences such as race, religion, culture, language, sexuality, gender and disability.
- 2.6 The fostering service works in partnership with children, parents, carers and all those involved and concerned with the child's welfare and best interests to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved.

3 Principles and Standards

- 3.1 Our overarching principles where the decision has been made that the child should be in foster care, or shared care arrangements include:
 - In all our activities, the child's best interests come first.
 - We will always aim to meet the needs of children and young people and their families at the earliest stage, either through the provision of shared care/supported living or where necessary, intervention from safeguarding services.
 - Children are best cared for by their families and in situations where this cannot be achieved safely, they need to be looked after in safe and stable placements.
 - In our assessments and work, we aim to understand and improve the child's lived experience.

- Work is carried out in partnership with parents and carers to enable them to meet their responsibilities and achieve best outcomes.
- Children are involved in decisions that affect them.
- In all our work, we maintain an awareness of equal opportunities and the impact of discrimination.
- We work closely with other agencies to improve support that is offered to children, young people and families.
- Work with children and families is undertaken with the legislative framework and makes use of best practice.
- Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story.
- Work with children is managed and supervised to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- We treat children, families and our working partners with courtesy and respect.

3.2 What this means in practice:

- Every foster carer we work with has a good quality assessment in which they have been involved.
- Every foster family we work with is seen regularly, with a clear purpose to visits.
- Every foster family we work with will have their voice visible in assessments, plans and reviews, including those of the children in their care.

3.3. Professional behaviours

- We will work with foster carers in consultation with them and treat them in a professional manner.
- We will communicate clearly and effectively.
- We will provide a working environment with high support and high challenge.
- We will encourage best practice and address poor practice.
- We will work together to resolve problems and create a learning culture.
- We will invest in talking to children, listening to children and young people and responding to children and young people.

3.4 This Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the principles and standards of expectation set out within:

- The Telford & Wrekin Promise to Looked After Children
- The Foster Carer's Charter
- Telford & Wrekin Children's Service Quality Assurance Framework

4 Management Structure and Staffing Arrangements

- 4.1 The service delivery manager is responsible for the strategic development of the service and is agency decision maker (ADM) for the service. Where appropriate, the manager will receive contributions from the specific team managers within the fostering service.

The service delivery manager is also the responsible representative in the Together4Children Permanency Partnership. The Together4Children Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) launched in September 2020, which brings together four local authorities: Telford & Wrekin Council, Staffordshire County Council, Shropshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

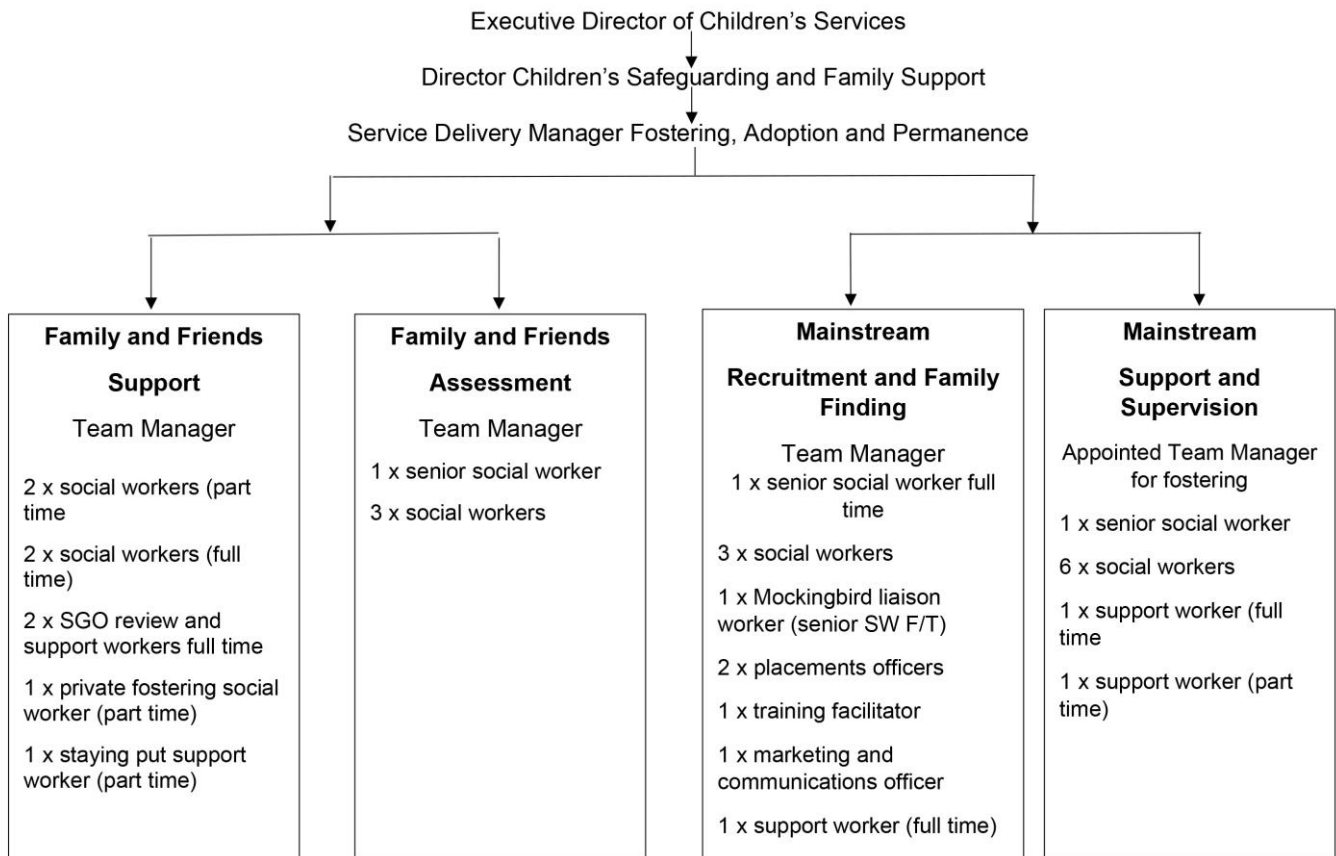
As a permanency partnership we are working together, to ensure our children achieve emotional, physical and legal permanence growing up in loving homes with adults who provide them with a strong sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

We plan to work closer together around fostering, connected persons and special guardianship. Telford took the lead on the implementation of the Mockingbird Family Model across the partnership launching the first constellation in June 2021 in collaboration with Shropshire County Council'. The Fostering Network is delivering the Mockingbird programme, which is an innovative method of foster care using the Mockingbird Family Model.

An extended family model that provides sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities.

- 4.2 The appointed team manager for fostering is responsible for the fostering operational policies and procedures of the fostering service and for ensuring that the service meets and complies with statutory requirements and National Minimum Standards and Regulations.
- 4.3 There are four team managers within the fostering service and each has specific responsibilities although the managers work closely together to ensure the efficient and effective running of the service.
- 4.4 The fostering service is responsible for the recruitment, training, support and retention of foster carers to ensure sufficiency of placements to meet the needs of the children in Telford who cannot remain with parents or within their family networks. Usually referred to as 'mainstream' foster carers, their terms of approval will set out the number, age and type of placements the carer can provide. Two team managers come under the umbrella of 'mainstream'.
- 4.5 The fostering service is also responsible for assessing alternative carers when their parents or a close relative cannot care for children. If a child becomes looked after by the local authority, the person caring for the child will need to be approved as a foster carer and will be referred to as a family and friends or connected person foster carer. The terms of their approval will only include the names of the children they are approved to care for. There are two team managers who come under the umbrella of 'Family and Friends' and this part of the service assesses and supports family and friends foster carers, special guardians and private foster carers.
- 4.6 The diagram below outlines the management structure and fostering teams.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TEAMS*



- 4.7 A team manager, who each hold a relevant social work qualification and either already have a management qualification, or have undertaken management and leadership training, or are working towards this, manages each team.
- 4.8 The fostering service social workers are registered with Social Work England and where relevant, Social Care Wales. Each social worker has a recognised social work qualification ((BA) (Hons) Social Work, CQSW, CSS or DipSW).
- 4.9 All staff members are experienced in working with children and families and are skilled in undertaking needs-led assessments. Our main model of practice is taking a systemic approach.
- 4.10 All team members have access to computers/laptops and email facilities supported by a dedicated administrative team. All staff have access to mobile working arrangements and they have been working remotely through the pandemic, or a mixture of remote working and office based.
- 4.11 We hold regular team meetings used to promote development, to share information, consult and to obtain feedback on issues relevant to the service. Meetings are now mostly face to face, although some blended approaches with virtual meetings on occasion
- 4.12 Reflective pod discussions take place regularly to support practice.

4.13 The fostering management team meets on a regular basis to discuss all business relating to the fostering service, to ensure the standardisation of service delivery across the teams, consider developments, both internally and externally, and to review and evaluate various service delivery requirements.

4.14 A service away day was held in January 2023 that allowed several new staff and the SDM to get to know each other better and come together as one service and consider what we liked and what we wanted to change in respect of service operations.

Fostering Service - Roles and Responsibilities

5 Family and Friends Team

Since June 2021, one team manager leads on assessments and the other leading on the supervision and support of connected carers, special guardians and private fostering arrangements.

5.1 Family and Friends (Assessment)

- Team manager (full-time)
- One senior social worker (full-time)
- Three social workers (full-time equivalent)

The team is primarily responsible for temporary approval assessments, viability assessments, special guardianship assessments and Form C assessments. The team works closely with the children's teams during care proceedings ensuring timescales are met for court directed assessments. The social workers guide and support as well as assess connected carers through a full fostering/SGO assessment, where in depth safeguarding checks, references and reflection and analysis are brought together to evidence the applicants' ability to meet each relevant order. These assessments are heard at both fostering panel and in the court arena to inform the care plan for the child.

5.2 Family and Friends (Support)

- Team manager (full-time)
- Two social workers (full-time)
- Two social workers (part-time 0.5)
- A special guardianship reviewing and support officer (full-time)
- One support worker (full-time)
- One private fostering social worker (part-time 0.5)
- One Staying Put support worker (part time)

The team is responsible for the supervision and support to family and friends foster carers to meet the needs of our children and young people placed in their care, ensuring that family and friends' foster carers comply with the National Minimum Standards and Regulations for the provision of fostering services.

5.3 The team manager (support) is responsible for ensuring that any support set out within special guardianship support plans is delivered, and for managing applications to the Adoption Support Fund. The team manager is also responsible for the assessment and ongoing support of private fostering arrangements.

5.3.1 The SGO reviewing and support officer primarily undertakes the annual review of special guardianship support plans. Social workers will undertake an assessment of need and make applications to the Adoption Support Fund when required. From 1 April 2022, the additional support worker post has been assisting with SGO annual reviews and is strengthening the support provided to special guardians, parents and children subject to an SGO.

5.3.2 The team manager (support) is responsible for the support groups for special guardians and family and friends foster carers, both held bi-monthly.

5.4 **Private fostering**

A private fostering arrangement is one made privately (without the involvement of the local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

5.4.1 The team has a designated social worker who takes the lead on private fostering and works with other team members to complete visits and completes a Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Record to ensure that the arrangement is suitable.

5.4.2 The private fostering social worker will regularly provide support, practical advice and information to private foster carers where needed. Regulation 8 visits are undertaken in the first year every 4-6 weeks.

5.4.3 After a child has been living in a private fostering arrangement for a year, visits under Regulation 8 will be undertaken on a 12 weekly basis and they will be presented to the local authority permanence panel to ensure arrangements continue to be suitable and there is a plan of permanence in place for the child. Legal orders are sought where appropriate.

5.4.4 Children whose private fostering arrangements are due to end at age 16 years must have a discharge-planning meeting at 15 years and 3/4s. This is to ensure that any post 16 needs are referred on to appropriate agencies and an exit plan provided in writing as to where to access services if they remain in need of support but are not eligible for continued support under private fostering. The family and friends team (support) will arrange this and will include all relevant agencies.

5.4.5 The private fostering social worker also undertakes raising awareness activities for Telford & Wrekin with staff and other agencies including health and education, and within the local community.

MAINSTREAM FOSTERING SERVICES

6 Recruitment and Family Finding Team

- Team manager (full time)
- Senior social worker (full time)
- Senior social worker (Mockingbird Liaison Worker) (full time)
- Two social workers (full time)
- Two placements officer (full time)
- Training officer (full time)
- Marketing and communications officer (full time)
- One fostering support worker

6.1 The team offers a full range of fostering services to approved foster carers and applicants: - assessment, supervision, training and support, forums, support groups and participation. The team also takes a lead on recruiting foster carers and developing the training programme. Family finding is primarily based within this team.

6.2 Foster carer recruitment and sufficiency strategy. This team is responsible for developing the fostering placement provision to support the broader placement commissioning.

6.3 Family finding and placements

- The team leads on new requests for placements for children and young people who require foster placements. The service works closely with the brokerage team to identify and match children and young people with either internal or external placements.
- There is an identified placements officer who co-ordinates all referrals and placement requests, offering a consistent approach and who implements the matching of placements in consultation with other staff within the service and children's teams.
- The team leads on family finding for children and young people who require permanence in long-term fostering placements.
- The team also is involved in identifying, planning and supporting step-down arrangements (see 6.4)

6.4 Specialist placements

The team leads on supporting specific children and young people at risk of moving to residential care who are currently in foster placement and children who are stepping down from residential to foster placements. They also lead on the parent and child arrangements.

6.5 The team leads on recruiting foster carers to meet sufficiency needs in fostering for specific required foster placements (see 10).

6.6 Foster carer assessments, induction, training and development:

- The team takes a lead on recruiting carers, including all marketing activities and events. The coronavirus pandemic has affected face-to-face events.
- The team co-ordinates all enquiries, initial visits and screens applications and allocations for assessments.
- The team manager co-ordinates and oversees all assessments of prospective foster carers and supervises all external assessors and identifies timescales for panel dates.
- Following approval, the team manager ensures that an allocated worker completes the inductions for all new foster carers.
- The team leads on all training and development for foster carers. A dedicated officer leads on supporting the team managers across the fostering service in arranging, facilitating and contributing to the annual training plan for all approved foster carers. This officer closely monitors training and development needs, attendance, and the impact of training.
- One to one support and bespoke training can be provided to some carers where there are special circumstances. A training policy is in place and provided to all approved foster carers. This policy outlines the service requirements for foster carers in relation to training and development.
- The training plan for carers is developed in consultation with foster carers. The training plan also draws on feedback from foster carer reviews, as well as identified areas from other sources, such as supervision.
- The marketing and communications officer takes a lead on communications with foster carers via social media or emails out to carers, such as newsletters and general updates.
- Direct links with corporate communications to support the recruitment of foster carers.

7 Support and Supervision Team

The staffing of this team is as follows:

- Team manager - appointed manager for the fostering service (full time)
- Senior social worker (full time)
- 5:6 social workers (full time)
- One fostering support worker (full time)
- One fostering support worker (25 hours per week)

7.1 The team manager, support and supervision, is responsible for the fostering service adherence and compliance with fostering National Minimum Standards and Regulations for fostering. Ofsted regulatory requirements in the provision of fostering service inspections by Ofsted, the provision of service reports, responding to Ofsted enquiries, implementation of any recommendations arising from Ofsted inspections of the fostering service. The team manager, support and supervision, is the accountable lead officer in

conjunction with the service delivery manager and other team managers for the review and production of the various policies, procedures, documents and guidance that are required of a fostering service.

7.2 Supervision, support and engagement of foster carers

The team supervises and supports foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people placed in their care, ensuring that foster carers comply with the National Minimum Standards and Regulations for the provision of fostering services.

7.3 Recruitment, assessment training and induction of foster carers

The team works in conjunction with the recruitment and family finding team to,

- Recruit foster carers through their participation in planned recruitment events throughout the year (face-to-face events have been affected by the pandemic).
- Participation in the delivery of 'Skills to Foster' training courses and other training courses for foster carers. Undertake Form F assessments, reports for foster carer reviews, risk assessments, health & safety checks.
- The induction of foster carers and the requirement that all newly approved foster carers comply with completing the training and development standards for newly approved foster carers.

7.4 Regular engagement, participation and communication meetings are held with all approved foster carers to obtain their active participation in developing and reviewing service policies, training and the provision of good foster placements.

7.5 Fostering support staff - evening and weekends

The team recruits, trains, and supervises support workers who provide direct support to all internal foster carers and children placed in their care as follows:

- Crisis intervention
- Day care
- Play
- Recreational activities
- Supporting the implementation of therapeutic parenting
- Transport
- Advice on some aspects of parenting styles and approaches
- Direct work with children
- Emergency support

7.6 The team manager also takes a lead on chairing transfer protocol meetings, especially where it involves internal foster carers (joining or leaving the service) and external independent fostering agency (IFA) carers transferring to another IFA, in which case the team manager or service delivery manager chairs the meeting.

- 7.7 The team manager and senior social worker process all local authority checks that are requested from other local authorities and fostering and adoption agencies for their assessments of prospective foster carers or adopters.
- 7.8 The team manager takes a lead on Fostering for Adoption (FFA) arrangements and liaises between the adoption service (Together4Children) and the ADM in respect of the approval (under Reg 25a, Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010). The team manager oversees FFA carers from a fostering perspective until the carers are formally matched by the ADM following the adoption panel matching process.

8 Foster Carer Reviews

The fostering service works closely with the Independent Safeguarding and Advocacy Service. The foster carer reviewing officers are located within this service.

Both services ensure that all approved foster carers are subject to foster carer reviews on at least an annual basis, of which all first reviews are presented to Telford & Wrekin fostering panel for consideration and recommendation to the agency decision maker (ADM).

Subsequent foster carer reviews, where there have been significant issues or an allegation, may be presented to the fostering panel. All other subsequent foster carer reviews are referred to the relevant team manager and then to the agency decision maker.

9 Operational Casework

The fostering service delivers the following operational casework.

- Placement support meetings: chaired by the managers or senior social workers in the fostering service and focuses on the needs of the carer/s and the child/ren to consider services and support that could maintain placement stability, where possible.
- Support to foster carers including evenings and weekends delivered by support staff as required.
- Out of hours triage – there is an on-call service accessed via a dedicated phone line available:
 - Monday to Friday – 6pm to 8pm
 - Saturday – 10am to 4pm
 - (No service on Sundays or Bank Holidays)
- Foster carers contact the triage social worker on duty who will discuss any concerns, provide advice, and assess if any additional support is required.

9.1 Foster carers' engagement, participation and support

The team managers for 'support and supervision' and 'recruitment and family finding' lead on supporting the involvement of our foster carers in:

- Foster carer forums

- Participation meetings
- Meeting with the Foster Carers Association
- Annual foster carer conference (postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic)
- Specific support groups for foster carers
- Sons and daughters' group (activity based annually)
- Recruitment events
- Events for foster carers and children (carers' children and fostered children) in conjunction with the Foster Carers Association

10 Placements

The Telford & Wrekin fostering service offers the following placements:

- 10.1 **Emergency Placements:** Foster carers provide emergency (same day/out of hours). The placements are for a time-limited period, usually 72 hours initially.
- 10.2 **Short Term Placements:** Foster carers provide placements for children who are often subject to care proceedings and where their long-term care plan is yet to be determined.
- 10.3 **Long-Term:** foster carers provide permanent or long-term placements for children whose care plan is to remain in foster care. The carers are committed to caring for children until they reach independence, and for providing ongoing support into adulthood.
- 10.4 **Fostering Plus:** carers provide placements (usually solo) for children and young people who are at high risk of entering residential care or making the transition from residential care into a family setting, until they reach independence. This type of fostering is also considered for carers who foster children with profound and/or complex disabilities, which require a higher level of skill.
- 10.5 **Family and Friends:** carers provide a home for a child or young person who is a relative or friend, (connected person) approved as a foster carer specifically for that child or children. Family and friends foster carers have equal access to support and training opportunities.
- 10.6 **Children with Disabilities/Short Breaks for children who usually live with birth family:** Carers are identified who can provide children with short stays on a regular basis. This can be anything from a few hours a week, to a few days a month with the same carer. The child is usually living within their birth family (and not in care) and this service provides support to the family to enable them to continue to care for the child who may have complex needs because of their disabilities.
- 10.7 **Shared Care:** for children who have particularly challenging behavioural issues that means parents or carers are under considerable pressure, who would benefit from a break (Section 17 of the Children Act 1989).

- 10.8 **Respite/short breaks for children who are in foster care:** carers provide short breaks for children in care. The short-term placements are planned either to support the aims of the child's care plan for a return home or to support the child's main placement.
- 10.9 **Parent and Child:** foster carers provide arrangements and/or placements to parents and their children where there are concerns about their ability to parent safely. This can include young people in care and their baby/young child or adults and their child/ren as well as support under s.17 of the Children Act 1989. The carer will support the needs of both the parent and their child/ren. The foster carer will work in partnership with the parent and the child/ren's social worker to provide care, support and assessment, as required. They do not generally take a lead on the assessment but will provide information that is included in any parenting assessment.
- 10.10 **Staying Put:** these arrangements are made with/between the foster carer and children who have lived with them and wish to continue living with their foster carer beyond 18 and until they are 21. The leaving care team in conjunction with the fostering service leads these placements.

11 Recruitment

- 11.1 Sufficiency: the fostering service will continue to recruit more foster carers for children in our care to ensure there is sufficient placement choice to enable children to be appropriately matched with foster carers, to remain in the area and to ensure that our carers reflect the diverse population of Telford & Wrekin. The recruitment strategy identifies areas that recruitment will focus on.
- 11.2 The fostering service will also ensure that it has enough supervising social workers for foster carers; to offer advice, support and supervision. We will ensure that any vacancies are recruited to without undue delay and that interim measures are put in place so that carer are supported. In addition to this, we provide support via support workers who will complete targeted work to support placements and the development of foster carers.
- 11.3 The fostering service will ensure that we have a strong market presence and effective recruitment strategy is supported by (and is not exhaustive):
- 11.3.1 Dedicated team focusing on the recruitment of foster carers.
 - 11.3.2 A 'Recommend a Friend' reward scheme.
 - 11.3.3 Stalls promoting fostering at local events.
 - 11.3.4 Information evenings.
 - 11.3.5 Coffee mornings for people interested in fostering.
 - 11.3.6 Advertising in local publications and newspapers.
 - 11.3.7 Radio advertising.
 - 11.3.8 Sponsorship of specific targeted locations.
 - 11.3.9 Partnership with the community participation team to access local communities.
 - 11.3.10 Advertising in local authority buildings.
 - 11.3.11 Constant recruitment campaign and not 'one off' campaigns.

- 11.3.12 An active Facebook and Twitter feed.
- 11.3.13 A strong Web presence.
- 11.3.14 Presence in the local community.
- 11.3.15 Targeting specific areas of Telford with spare bedrooms.
- 11.4 Enquiries: The recruitment and family finding team receive all initial enquiries. The team receive enquiries by telephone during office hours to a dedicated telephone number or accept an enquiry form via our website at www.telfordfostering.co.uk. Alternatively, enquiries can be made by a direct message on social media platforms where the fostering service has a presence.
- 11.5 Telford & Wrekin Council's fostering service will respond to an enquiry within 24 working hours. The officer will take a few details and decide whether an initial visit is required.
- 11.6 We will offer enquirers an appointment for a home visit within five working days. The visit enables the potential applicant to obtain more information about fostering. After which, we will invite them to participate in preparation training, Skills to Foster. Usually comprising of three full day training sessions and will provide enquirers an insight into fostering.
- 11.7 In two-carer households, both carers will complete the training. Following the completion of the Skills to Foster training, if assessed as appropriate an assessor will be allocated and their assessment will commence.
- 11.8 Approved foster carers who are transferring from another agency can transfer their training record although they may need to complete certain parts of Skills to Foster if they have had a break from fostering for a significant period. All carers complete an introduction to therapeutic parenting and other training identified for them by the fostering service.
- 11.9 Assessment and approval of applicants and foster carers:
- All applicants to foster for Telford & Wrekin are checked, prepared, assessed and approved in accordance with the relevant fostering regulations, guidance and standards.
 - The fostering panel considers all applications to foster, the first foster carer review of the carer's approval and can consider reports concerning allegations against carers.
 - All carers at the point of approval sign a Foster Care Agreement and our aim will be to review these annually following the foster carer review.
 - Approved foster carers have a named fostering social worker and are supported and supervised in line with the Fostering Support and Supervision Policy (see Handbook) and the requirements of the placement.
 - Children are carefully matched with foster carers by considering the needs of the child; the experience of the carer; and the impact on the fostering household.

- Foster carers are provided with as much information as possible prior a child being placed with them. A risk assessment and 'matching' document are completed to support the placement.
- Support needs for the child and carer are considered at the point of matching, when the child is placed, and for the duration of the placement.
- Our aim is to provide children with the foster carer's profile prior to an introduction or placement being made by the child's social worker. Children can find reading about a carer and seeing photographs of them and their home reassuring as moving to live with someone they have not met before can create anxiety for the child.
- Foster carers, children in care and their parents will have access to the compliments, comments and complaints process.
- Children will have access to an advocacy service and the Children's Care Council.

11.10 When a person applies to become a foster carer, the fostering service may assess their suitability to foster. There is a two-stage assessment process (Stage 1 is mostly checks and references and Stage 2 is mostly the assessor interviews, although does include some references) and the manager will decide whether the assessment should be completed concurrently, or to complete Stage 1 checks first, based on the initial visit report and application. The allocated social worker will arrange to visit the applicants within 10 working days from being allocated to the family.

11.11 The assessment that is completed to determine if someone is suitable to become a foster carer is referred to as a 'Form F' report. This must be completed and presented to fostering panel to make a recommendation within eight months from the date of the application. Telford & Wrekin aims to complete Form F assessments within 20 weeks.

12 Family and Friends assessments

12.1 The first step to becoming a family and friends foster carer is usually for a viability assessment to be completed. If the outcome of this is positive, a full assessment referred to as a 'Form C' is completed and this is presented to fostering panel. The timescale for completing the viability and the Form C assessment and presenting it to panel for a recommendation and ADM decision is 16 weeks. In some cases, where it is in the welfare interests of the child, the child may be placed with someone they are connected to under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010 Regulations. This is where temporary approval as a foster carer is agreed by the ADM whilst the Form C assessment is completed. The assessment period of 16 weeks may be extended for a further 8 weeks in exceptional circumstances.

13 Fostering Approval (Including Family and Friends)

13.1 The completed assessment will be shared with the applicants prior to the fostering panel. It is presented to the fostering panel with a recommendation on whether the applicant is suitable to foster, and what the terms of their approval should be. The recommendation to panel will set out the type of placement, number and age range of children to be placed.

Approval may be limited to specific children (for example, family and friends approvals). Some recommendations may be that an applicant is not approved.

- 13.2 The fostering panel usually meets twice a month to consider all applications. The fostering panel consists of children's social care representatives and independent representatives who have a relevant background and experience that support their role (e.g. fostering, care experience, health, education etc.)
- 13.3 Applicants are invited to attend the fostering panel with the assessing social worker and, as appropriate, the child's social worker. Written information about the panel's role and function will be available beforehand.
- 13.4 The fostering panel will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicant to foster and the terms of their approval.
- 13.5 The agency decision maker receives the recommendation of the panel. All information including the panel minutes will be made available to the agency decision maker to enable them to make a considered decision within seven days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of minutes.
- 13.6 The foster carer or prospective foster care will be informed orally of the decision within two working days and in writing within five working days, clearly stating the terms of the approval. Carers will be required to sign the Foster Carer Agreement before they can have a child placed with them.
- 13.7 In circumstances where the agency decision maker is minded not to approve, the applicants will be advised of their options in the agency decision maker's letter as to how to appeal via the independent review mechanism or the fostering panel.

14 Post Approval Support and Supervision

- 14.1 Approved foster carers have access to an electronic copy of the foster carer handbook that sets out the expectations of and relationship with the department.
- 14.2 Newly approved foster carers are required to complete the Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS) for foster care. This is part of the framework of induction, core training and continuing professional development. This equips foster carers with the essential skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children in their care.
- 14.3 Carers will be expected to evidence that they have met the induction requirements by achieving a Certificate of Completion of the TSDS on completion of a portfolio of evidence of competency within the first 12 months of approval (18 months for family and friends carers). Foster carers will be expected to update and develop their knowledge and skills through their personal development plan, which will contribute to the foster carer review process. Foster carers are required to maintain an ongoing 'portfolio' of training and development, which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills, required of them by the fostering service.

14.4 Foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience.

14.5 The fostering panel considers the foster carers' first annual review and recommends to the agency their ongoing approval, or de-registration. Foster carer reviews are independently chaired and involve the foster carer and fostering social worker, who provide written reports. The views of the children and young people in placement and their social workers inform the review. The views of the carer's own children are also invited. The review focuses on the performance of the carer, identifies training requirements and makes recommendations for future approval.

15 Post Approval Training

15.1 The fostering service has a strong commitment to the ongoing training of foster carers, recognising the valuable contribution it makes to their development, helping them to understand the fostering task, increasing their knowledge and skills, and underpinning the safe and appropriate care of children. Further reinforced by the TSD Standards' expectations that carers continue to engage with, and with core and continuing professional development training and learning opportunities.

15.2 The training programme is reviewed and updated annually and offers a range of training courses to meet the different requirements of our foster carers. Training manuals are available for foster carers, family and friends foster carers, and special guardians.

16 Support

16.1 Support for foster carers is given a high priority in Telford & Wrekin and the services available to carers include:

- 16.1.1 Supervision and support from a named fostering social worker.
- 16.1.2 A mentoring scheme for foster carers.
- 16.1.3 Support groups who meet monthly.
- 16.1.4 'Men who Foster' support group.
- 16.1.5 Out of hours support via the emergency duty team (EDT).
- 16.1.6 Out of hours support provided by the fostering triage.
- 16.1.7 Membership of The Fostering Network.
- 16.1.8 Access to The Fostering Network advice and mediation worker.
- 16.1.9 Provision of equipment necessary for fostering.
- 16.1.10 Financial support through agreed allowances.
- 16.1.11 Support workers to directly support foster carers.
- 16.1.12 Handbook for foster carers.
- 16.1.13 Newsletter for foster carers and foster children.
- 16.1.14 Up to date information through the website and text.
- 16.1.15 Foster carer forums.
- 16.1.16 Foster carer participation groups.
- 16.1.17 Dedicated systemic consultant.
- 16.1.18 In house therapist to support foster carers.

16.2 To improve the life chances for children, the following lists some of the services that are available to children in placements:

16.2.1 LAC CAMHS (BEEU): whose aim is to provide a timely response to the needs of children and young people looked after and their carers and whose placements are under stress, or in danger of disruption.

16.2.2 Head teacher of the virtual school for looked after children, and education co-ordinators and mentors, linking into specific education services.

16.2.3 Named nurses for looked after children.

16.2.4 Access to drugs advisory workers.

16.2.5 The Voice project.

16.2.6 Advocacy service.

16.2.7 Hot Shot annual celebration for looked after children.

16.2.8 Family Solutions.

16.2.9 Teenage pregnancy support.

17 Staying Put

17.1 Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to preventing social exclusion among care leavers and has developed a 'Staying Put' policy to ensure that, when appropriate, they can continue to live with former foster carer(s) after their 18th birthday and make the transition to independent living at a pace that suits their needs.

17.2 The primary aim of the policy is to allow young people to remain with their carers past their 18th birthday to promote a gradual transition to independent living. This recognises that many young people in care experience delayed maturity, and that their 18th birthday may be an inappropriate point to leave foster care.

17.3 The Staying Put policy 2022-23 provides information, for practitioners and managers, in making and supporting Staying Put arrangements.

17.4 The Staying Put support worker (part-time) takes a lead on arrangements for Staying Put and ensures contracts are in place to promote young people remaining with their former foster carers.

18 Comments, Compliments and Complaints

18.1 Telford & Wrekin Council welcomes feedback on the service it provides to children, birth parents and foster carers, to enable improvements to be made.

18.2 There is a complaints procedure, which is accessible to all service users and carers. There are two stages to the procedure, which can be found on the Council's website. All complaints should aim to be dealt with informally where possible, or escalated to the Council's customer relationship team (customer.relationship@telford.gov.uk).

19 Contact details for further information

Service Delivery Manager – Fostering

2nd Floor, A wing
Darby House
Lawn Central
Telford
TF3 4JA
Telephone: 01952 380353

For complaints or representation regarding the fostering service:

Customer Relationship Team

Telford & Wrekin Council

Addenbrooke House

Ironmasters Way

Telford

TF3 4NT

Telephone: 01952 382006

Email: customer.relationship@telford.gov.uk or complete the online form using the following link: [Introduction - Make a complaint and the complaints process - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)