



Herefordshire Council Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose 2023

OFSTED Registration: URN - SCO56304

Contents:

1. Introduction.....	Page 3
2. Aims of the Fostering Service.....	Page 3
3. Objectives of the Fostering Service	Page 4
4. Foster Carer's Charter.....	Page 5
5. Management & Staffing structure.....	Page 5
6. Service provision - types of fostering we provide.....	Page 8
7. Fees, Allowances & Expenses.....	Page 9
8. Recruitment & Assessment.....	Page 9
9. Fostering Panel.....	Page 13
10. Supervision, Support & Training for Foster carers.....	Page 15
11. Continued assessment of suitability & Annual Reviews.....	Page 19
12. Compliments, Complaints, Allegation & Regulatory/Monitoring.....	Page 20
13. Advocacy and Children's Rights.....	Page 21
14. Equality & Diversity.....	Page 22
15. Post SGO support and Private Fostering service.....	Page 22
16. Further Information.....	Page 22

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The regulations state that a fostering service must compile a written statement of purpose which sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a whole, and the services and facilities which are provided. The statement outlines the same.

1.2 The Statement of Purpose also links with the Children's Guide which is provided to all children, subject to the child's age and understanding when first placed.



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1.3 The Statement of Purpose is available to Ofsted.

1.4 It is made available to staff of the organisation, foster carers, supported lodgings providers, Staying Put providers, children and young people, service users, parents, elected members (Councillors), professional partner agencies and members of the public. It is reviewed on an annual basis and revised to reflect any changes as necessary.

2.0 Our aims:

The main aims for Herefordshire Council are:

- To provide high quality and safe care within a family setting for children and young people who have been assessed as requiring a foster placement.
- To ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing therapeutic care for the duration of their childhood.
- To ensure children are protected from emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect.
- To ensure children receive the education, health and social care they need to maximise their potential.
- To provide a range of Foster Carers able to meet the emotional, physical, cultural, religious and ethnic needs of all the children in care with Herefordshire Council.
- To ensure that the services provided are responsive, flexible and supportive of carers.
- To develop and provide a high quality, comprehensive and integrated service that delivers excellent outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
- To allocate supervising social workers who have manageable caseloads, which enables them to practice relationship based and responsive social work.
- To streamline and review processes, forms and recording systems to maximise the time social workers and foster carers can spend on children rather than undertaking administrative tasks.
- To provide foster carers and social workers with access to clinical consultations based in the fostering teams.
- To provide 24-hour support for all foster carers from supervising social workers within the fostering service who provide a consistent trauma informed response.
- To provide a service consisting of managers, practitioners and support staff who are appropriately qualified, DBS checked, and registered with their professional regulatory bodies.

3.0 The main Service Objectives are:

- To place children and young people in local foster placements where relationships with family, friends and community are maintained and continuity of education, health and cultural links and activities is guaranteed. In instances where it is not possible to achieve this within the Council's foster placements an appropriate placement outside of the resources of the Council will be sought.
- To ensure there is a sufficient range of safe and appropriate placements available for the Children who need to be Looked After in Herefordshire.
- To provide foster placements for children that are appropriately matched, that meet children's emotional needs and enable them to thrive and are resilient to unplanned breakdowns.
- To maintain a sufficient number of foster care placements in relation to the location, numbers, needs, age range and characteristics of the looked after population and review this annually through the recruitment strategy.
- To recruit Foster Carers who are trained and supported in providing safe care to children who live with them. The service will determine the number and types of foster placements required and produce an annual recruitment plan.
- To recognise and value the diverse nature of the community it serves and proactively engage with the local community to identify potential carers.
- To actively monitor and supervise all placements to ensure children are safe, their needs are met and they are making progress to achieve positive outcomes.
- To contribute to and ensure effective multi-disciplinary and partnership working to meet the health, educational and social needs of children within placements.
- To recognise the importance of and support appropriate levels of contact with family and community as is consistent with their welfare and care plan.
- To achieve permanence for all children who are unable to return safely to their families and promote 'Staying Put' for those young people who are secure within their foster placement beyond their 18th birthday.
- Children with disabilities are to be placed in an environment that recognises and caters for their disability, and at the same time promotes their social inclusion.
- The service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Children will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, disability or social class in terms of service provision. Wherever possible children are matched within their own cultural, racial, linguistic and religious communities, and where this is not possible, plans must be put in place to meet the child's cultural needs.
- To ensure the views of children, parents and carers are sought and taken into account, having regard for their age and understanding, in the continuous development and improvement of the service.
- To work with the Children in Care Council, foster carers, Child Care teams, and other partners to share Herefordshire's vision and ensure meaningful consultation informs all Fostering Service development.
- To remain committed and seek innovation to continuous development informed by national, regional and local interest groups, the Department for Education and Improvement partner, Leeds City Council.
- To ensure staff and carers are well trained and competent in delivering a quality Fostering Service, including opportunities for continued learning and professional development.
- To provide all staff and carers' support and supervision with clear lines of accountability and management.
- To provide each Foster Carer a named allocated Supervising Social Worker.

- To operate clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service, including the maintenance of comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed.
- To ensure all complaints and allegations against carers/staff are investigated under departmental procedures in a timely fashion and lessons learned filter to improvements in future practice.
- The Fostering Service operates a Fostering Panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of Foster Carers and foster placements. The panel will ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making.
- Through the recruitment programme, specific training and supervision, Foster Carers are expected, with support, to give each child placed the best life chances available to them and an opportunity to be safe and secure, achieve in education, health, relationships and transitions to independence or moves back home to birth families.
- To meet the growing need for the fostering service to provide effective and prompt Kinship assessments of 'family and friend'.
- For those children who require external specialist placements (IFA or Residential placement), a referral is made to the Home Finding team who aims to source and identify potential placements, working in collaboration with the child's social worker.
- A HIPSS (Herefordshire Intensive Support Scheme) has been commissioned from Action for Children and in-house fostering HIPSS project Co-ordinator to assess and meet regulatory requirements in relation to HIPSS carers to meet the needs of more challenging placements and reduce spend on IFA and Residential costs.
- To develop supported lodgings (18+ placements) and to recruit accordingly to provide placements for those young people who present to social care with needs that are additional to housing accommodation.
- To ensure assessment of carers seeking to provide permanency for children via Special Guardianship Orders is completed effectively and efficiently.
- To ensure Special Guardians' assessed support needs are met and to be reviewed at least annually.

4.0 Foster Carers' Charter:

4.1 Herefordshire Fostering Service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances are positive for Children in care.

4.2 In order to achieve this, it is important to have a working relationship which is based on trust and respect among all children's services that are involved in the care of the child.

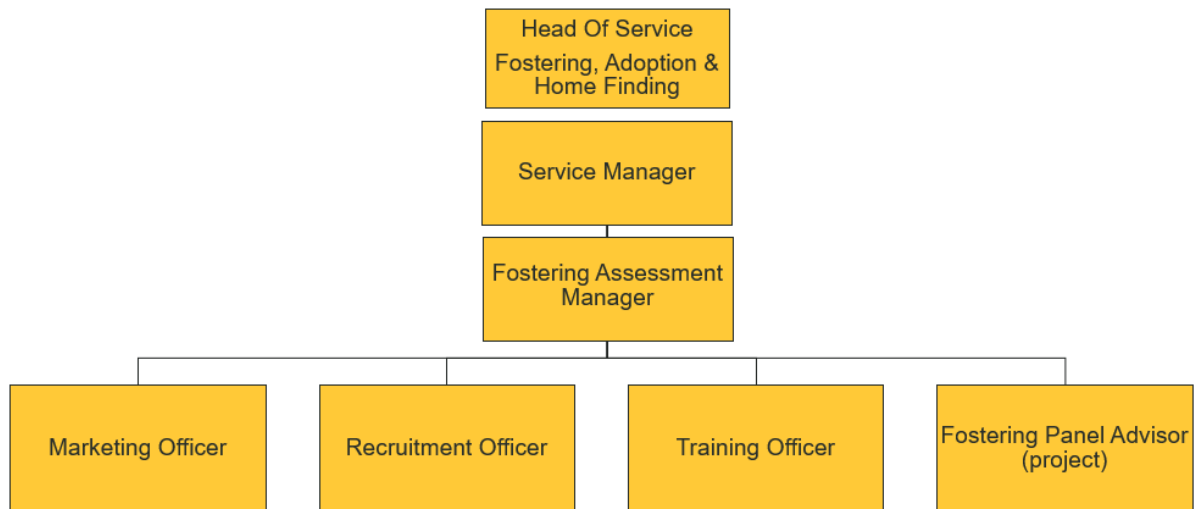
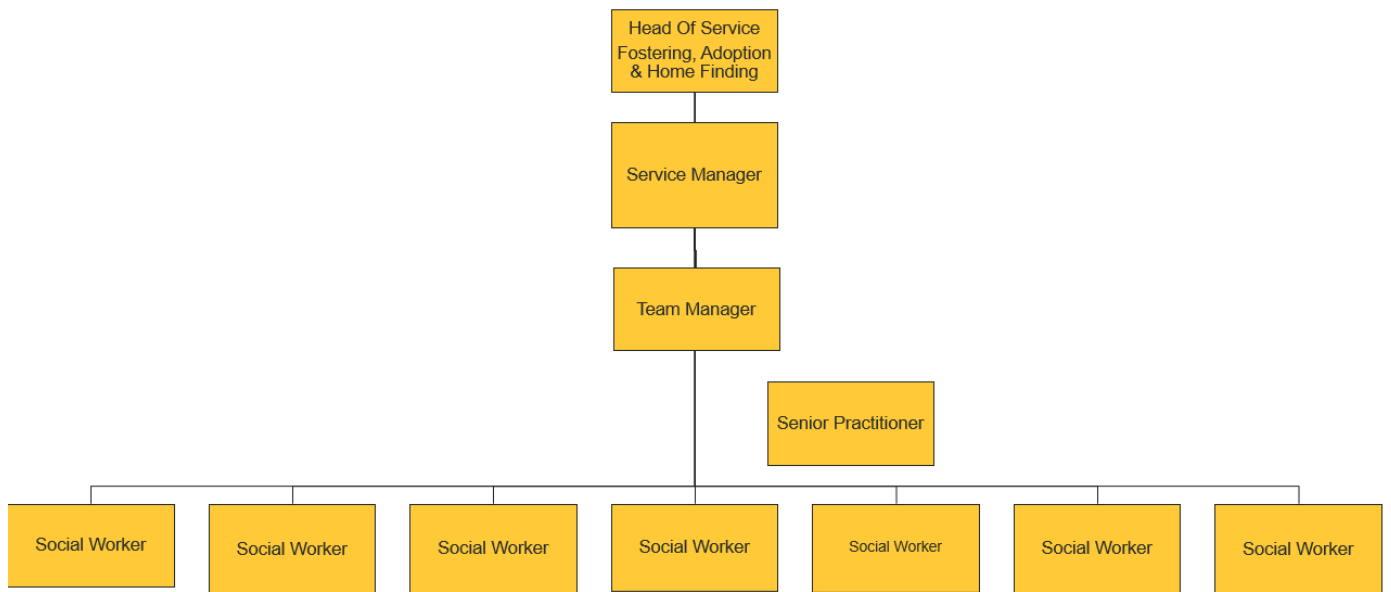
4.3 The charter explains what the roles and responsibilities of the service and the carers towards each other and the children we care for.

5.0 The structure of the Fostering Service:

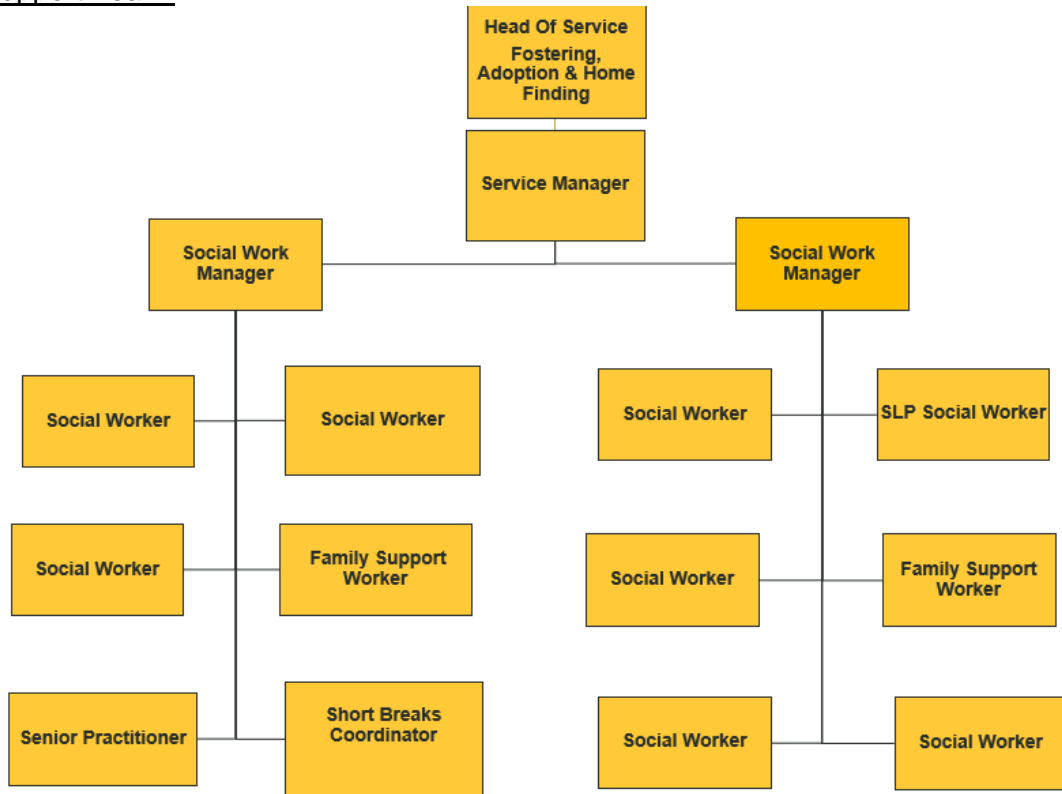
5.1 The Fostering Service is managed by the Head of Service for Fostering, Adoption and Home Finding, who is managed by the Service Director. There is a Service Manager and three Team Managers who manage dedicated fostering teams. These teams are responsible for recruitment and assessment of foster carer, for the supervision, support, and post approval support, including connected carers. They are managed by the Service Managers who is managed by the Head of Service.

5.2 The OFSTED registered manager appointed to manage the Fostering Service under Regulation 10 of the Fostering Services Regulations is: Valerie Williams Service Manager. The Responsible Individual is Robina Khan Head of Service. Please see the Fostering Service Structure below:

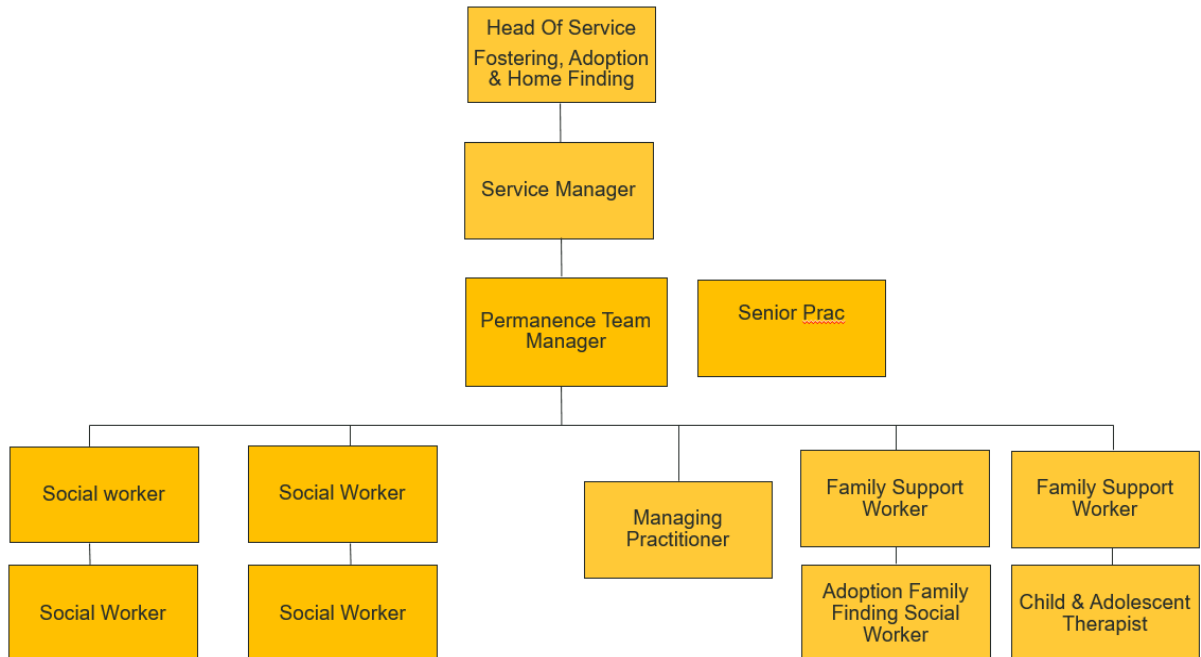
Recruitment and Assessment Team:



Fostering Support Team:



Permanence Support Team:



6.0 What types of fostering do we provide?

6.1 **Short-Term Fostering:** Short term fostering is offering temporary care for a child from babies, infants up to teenagers with differing needs. A short term foster placement can last from a few days, several months or a couple of years depending on the situation. The care and attention you give the children can help prepare them for their next move either returning to their birth families or to a longer-term placement.

6.2 **Long-Term Fostering:** Long term fostering provides children and young people a more permanent home with you, often over a number of years till they are 18 years or beyond under 'Staying Put Arrangements'. Children coming into a long term fostering placement need a stable, solid and loving home environment where they can feel truly settled and an integrated member of your family. Foster carers will support children to keep in touch with the people and places that are important to them to maintain lifelong links and fulfil their potential towards independence.

6.3 **Emergency Care:** Providing your home, love, care and nurture to children who have been removed from their family due to an immediate risk to their safety and wellbeing. These often take place in an emergency and can be in unsociable hours. Emergency foster carers are there for children for a brief period of time until short term carers are available or until the child is able to return to their birth family. You'll need to be able to provide a safe space in an emergency with little notice and be willing to look after children of different ages and needs.

6.4 **Respite and Support Care:** Respite and support carers provide valuable support to foster families who may be experiencing difficulties or simply need some time to unwind from fostering. Respite carers provide families and foster carers with a network of support where a child in their care stays with their respite foster parent for a few nights. Generally, respite care takes place over the weekend and during school holidays.

6.5 **Parent and Child Fostering:** Parent and child foster carers offer a home to both parent and child. Sometimes, new parents, due to their own early childhood experiences may not have had the guidance or skills to raise their child. By sharing your knowledge and offering invaluable support, you're helping a family to stay together and develop parenting skills. You will be providing extra help and care to support parents to successfully care for their child and your input helps decide whether the parent should be allowed to continue caring for their child or by somebody else.

6.6. **Foster Carers for Children who are Unaccompanied and Asylum Seeking Children:** Unaccompanied and Asylum seeking children who arrive in the UK without their parents or carers usually go into Local Authority care and will often live with approved foster carers when there is no suitable family member or guardian to care for them. There are many reasons why a child or young person may feel that they are no longer safe in their home country and will also have particular emotional, practical, language and cultural needs that their foster carers will have to consider. Alongside the task of caring for these children on a day-to-day basis, foster carers will also need to support them through the process of applying for permission to stay in the UK, and possibly to prepare for the return to their home country if appropriate. The foster carer will be fully supported by a dedicated social worker experienced in working with unaccompanied and asylum seeking children.

6.7 **Short Breaks Foster carers:** Short breaks foster carers will provide planned sleepovers for children who are living at home with their birth families. There are many children in foster care and with their families who have a wide range of conditions that impacts their ability to engage in everyday activities, look after themselves and thrive. This includes sensory disabilities, learning

difficulties and mobility problems. You will provide a child or children with one to three night breaks every few weeks to enjoy a safe, nurturing and fun environment. Short breaks foster carers can offer a break to birth families and to foster families with children having a range of physical, learning and emotional disabilities. If the break is offered to foster families then it is known as Respite care. The local authority will work closely with you, providing specialist guidance and training to ensure that together we can give the child the care and support they need to thrive.

6.8 Supported Lodgings: Supported lodgings carers provides homes for young people age 18 to 25-year-olds who need a guiding hand as they move towards independence.

6.9 Kinship Foster carers: Kinship foster care is when a family member, friend or a connected person becomes a child's official foster carer. You must be assessed and approved before the child comes to live with you. There are times when children come to live with you in an emergency and you are 'temporarily approved' as a foster carer until the assessment and approval process is completed. The child is considered 'looked after' by the local authority, which shares parental responsibility with the child's parents.

6.10 Private Fostering: Private fostering is when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is living for 28 days or more with someone who is not a close relative. This might be a friend, a great aunt, a cousin or someone else known to the child. Private fostering arrangements are agreed by the parent and private foster carer and not the local authority. As a private foster carer, you may be asked to make day-to-day decisions for the child, but you do not have parental responsibility. To keep vulnerable children safe and support families, by law parents and carers must notify their local authority if they have a private fostering arrangement.

7.0 Fees, Allowance & Expenses:

7.1 Our fee structure was reviewed with significant uplift of 5% received by all carers in 2022-2023. Our allowances increase each year taking into account inflation.

7.2 In 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 Herefordshire Council increased fostering fees and allowances by 5% to assist support to our foster carers and retention. Please see current fostering fees and allowance.



FOSTER CARE RATES
2023-24.pdf

8.0 Recruitment & Assessment:

- The Financial year 2022-2023 has been a challenging year for fostering recruitment teams. Ofsted's National Statistics report, Fostering in England 2021 to 2022: main findings (updated 16th May 2023) shows a clear message that post Covid and with cost of living challenges recruiting foster carers is very challenging nationally, including for IFA agencies. The number of approved mainstream fostering households has decreased by 4% and the number of approved mainstream fostering places has decreased by 5%. Higher numbers of enquiries are not translating into approvals in line with the national trend.
- A low level of enquiries and loss of carers over recent years means stability of carer capacity at best and potentially a reduction in placement capacity for mainstream care which must be addressed via significant focussed recruitment efforts. The Foster Carer recruitment strategy 2023/24 seeks to generate a net growth of 3 carers and 5 placements 2023-24 and a further 10 carers (15 placements) annually via professional staff development, active marketing, and a carer retention strategy to include payments and training.

- Monthly targets of 32 enquiries should lead to two approvals per month with a time lag of 6-8 months. With increased use of kinship care, SGO and re-unification approaches, this should mean a significant reduction in the demand for IFA and the associated reduced financial risk.
- We will continue to focus our recruitment and assessments on carers who can meet our sufficiency needs with a clear focus on fostering for parent and child, siblings, children with disabilities, and children with complex needs as well as children aged 5+ and 11+ years.

8.1 What recruitment involves:

- Targeted activity within specific communities in the County.
- Participation in a range of County wide events.
- Co-coordinating and organising events where foster carers and young people in care can share their real life experiences.
- Utilising social media to reach wider audiences and specific targeted fostering campaigns as above.
- Holding drop in sessions
- Newspaper articles
- Newspaper advertisements
- Distribution of leaflets and posters
- Information disseminated through displays and presentations
- Herefordshire Council website.
- Word of mouth through existing foster carers
- The recommend a friend scheme

8.2 Enquiries & Initial Visit:

Herefordshire Fostering Service actively welcomes enquiries from all individuals who are interested in fostering, regardless of age, marital status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or disability. Our Duty workers and recruitment officer manages the “front door” promptly and provide ongoing communication with potential applicants. If the enquirer wishes to proceed, they will need to register their interest on Herefordshire Fostering Form as part of the Initial screening and the Fostering information pack will be sent out. A social worker will conduct an initial home visit and will discuss the application form. The applicants must give consent for Herefordshire to make relevant safeguard checks and to assess their initial suitability to become a Foster Carer. Please see Herefordshire Fostering Form [here](#).



Timescales:

- Initial enquiries will be responded to within one working day
- Information Packs will be sent out within one working day
- A follow up telephone call will take place within five working days
- Initial home visit offered within ten working days
- From application to Fostering Panel should meet Fostering National Minimum Standard of eight months. (Fostering NMS 13:2011) The Fostering Service is aiming to complete any foster carers assessment within four to six months.

8.3 Assessment process:

- Applicants are assessed thoroughly, sensitively and openly by staff who are appropriately qualified and supervised. Foster Care regulations and The Fostering National Minimum Standards form the basis of the assessment. To meet these requirements the Fostering Service assesses potential foster carers using the Coram BAAF Form F format.
- For children placed with a connected person, the fostering team will complete the full assessment in 16 weeks or up to 24 weeks in some circumstances, in line with Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- The process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts. These can be carried out concurrently. The following conditions must be met when applying for general approval as a foster carer. The general principles of an assessment applies to all assessments for all types of Fostering.

Stage 1: Information required within 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 days of receiving all relevant information in that stage.

Where, having regard to any information obtained, it is decided (by the agency decision maker) that the applicant is not suitable to become a foster carer, the applicant must be notified in writing with reasons. This notification may be given whether or not all of this information has been obtained. Such a notification may not be given more than 10 working days after all the information (detailed above) has been obtained. The applicant has no right to make representations about the decision or to have their case reviewed under the Independent Review Mechanism. However, the applicant must be informed that they can complain via the fostering service's complaints process if they are unhappy with the way in which their case has been handled. The complaints process should address whether or not the applicant's case has been handled in a reasonable way, rather than the question of the applicant's suitability to foster.

Where all the specified information required for Stage 1, has been obtained and notification has not been given within 10 working days that the applicant is not suitable, then the application must proceed to assessment - stage two.

Note that Stages One and Two of the assessment process can be carried out concurrently, but the stage one information must be sought as soon as possible and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed stage one must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received.

Safeguard checks undertaken:

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks on all members of the household aged 17 or over and regular visitors to the household. This will involve disclosure of information about any criminal convictions or cautions and other information which may be held by the police or government agencies relevant to the protection of children.
- The applicant will also be required to have a medical examination completed by their GP and the report will be made available to the Herefordshire Council Medical Adviser their comments about the health of the applicant and any impact on their potential to foster.

Once the applicant indicates a wish to proceed, they will be invited to attend Herefordshire 'Skills to Foster' face to face training and safeguarding training. The Skills to Foster course comprises four sessions run over three days. We run this jointly with foster carers on all sessions. We keep groups small and as interactive as possible.

The Sessions cover:

1. Introductions and Identity
2. Attachment and Secure Base – from a trauma informed perspective.
3. Safer Caring
4. Transitions

We ensure that we cover areas such as why children come into care, legal context, support for Foster Carers, record keeping and contact. The skills to foster training emphasises our trauma informed therapeutic approach to parenting.

Stage 2: Applicants will be assigned an assessing Social Worker, who will begin their assessment. Further safeguard checks will be undertaken including:

- Verification of identity and personal history.
- Herefordshire Council's database checks including enquiries to all relevant Social Care Departments and Child Protection Registers including Oversea Checks [if applicable].
- Enquiries to other relevant agencies including NSPCC and Probation.
- At least 3 personal referees who will be interviewed in person and will provide written references.
- Employment referees.
- Health and Safety Checks
- Previous partners' checks
- Soldiers', Sailors' & Airmen's Families Association, [SSAFA] checks for Armed Forces,
- Conversation with Adult children as part of the assessment and also to provide a reference for the applicant.
- References from schools and nursery if applicable.
- Pet and Dog assessments
- Safe Care Plan
- Any risk assessments if applicable.

The allocated Social Worker is expected to visit approximately six to eight occasions to meet and collect information about all members of the household. The assessment will explore; the family composition; the experiences of the applicants own upbringing; their current and past relationships, Civil partnership, marriages etc, their motivation for becoming a foster carer, their skills in relation to parenting or communicating with children. The assessment especially focuses on the applicant's potential to provide emotionally attuned and reparative parenting and to assist their understanding of the Fostering Service's expectations.

Records compiled by another fostering service, or an adoption agency, can be used to inform the new assessment of the applicant's suitability to foster. For instance, if previous partners have been interviewed in the past to verify facts, and the current assessing social worker is satisfied with the records in respect of these interviews, it should not be necessary to repeat the interviews if no further information is required. The assessing social worker should, however, satisfy themselves as to the quality and continuing relevance of the information before using it to inform the current assessment.

All information and observations obtained from the assessment, safeguard checks, reference checks and training will form the basis of an assessment. This report is shared with the applicant and then presented to the Fostering Panel. Applicants are invited to attend the Fostering Panel when their application is being considered. The Fostering Panel makes recommendations about the suitability of the applicant to be approved as Foster Carers.

The Agency Decision Maker who in Herefordshire is the Head of Fostering, Adoption and Home

Finding, receives the recommendation of the Fostering Panel and on behalf of the Service makes the final decision about approval. Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the Service's decision.

The full assessment process, on average, takes four to six months. Every effort is made to ensure there are no avoidable delays. All information is held on a secure file and can be viewed by the applicant, on request. References from external agencies and personal references, which are provided in confidence, cannot be shared without permission of both the subject and the relevant referee.

8.4 Non acceptance of Applications:

Applications will not be accepted from people who:

- Are in a household with a transient resident population – i.e. guest house or one taking students
- Wish to continue to work as registered child minders
- Wish to continue to be approved to foster for another local authority or independent agency
- Wish to continue to privately foster children

9.0 Fostering Panel

The Fostering Service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a 'Central List' of Panel members. The Panel Chair and Vice Chair are independent people with professional or personal experience of fostering. Other panel members on the central list include: Social Workers with more than three years relevant post-qualifying experience; a Councillor; previously care experienced young people; foster carers; an education representative, a representative from health, independent members with experience of fostering, and the Panel Advisor. The Panel meets fortnightly on a Wednesday of every month and an additional panel is held if needed to allow additional or urgent cases to be heard. Detailed minutes are kept of all Panel meetings.

The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster carer, or 'family and friends' foster carer and the terms of their approval;
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the Fostering Service;
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a foster carer.

New applicants and existing foster carers are always invited and encouraged to attend Panel when their application or review is presented to Panel. Fostering social worker and children's social workers are expected to attend to support the foster carer. The assessing social worker should also inform the Panel Administrator about the arrangements for the foster carers to attend the Panel meeting and whether they require additional support such as an interpreter or have any special requirements.

The Panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it, feeding back any evidence of good practice or concerns to the Agency Decision Maker and Registered Manager. The Panel makes recommendations to the Fostering Service and these recommendations are referred to the 'Agency Decision Maker' for a decision. The Agency Decision Maker will consider all the reports and recommendation and make a decision as to the

suitability of the applicant to foster within 7 working days of receipt of the panel's recommendation and final set of panel minutes. The decision must be recorded, together with reasons and the accompanying paperwork must be recorded on Mosaic system.

If a decision is made to approve a foster carer, written notice of the decision and the terms of the approval, signed by the Agency Decision Maker, will be sent to the foster carer together with two copies of the Foster Care Agreement. The agreement sets out the terms and conditions for Herefordshire foster carers, the Fostering Service and Herefordshire's Children's Social Services. Fostering social workers need to ensure that newly approved foster carers understand fully the expectations of them under the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Upon approval, foster carers should be issued with an agreed form of identification i.e. an ID badge in Herefordshire to enable their role as a foster carer to be verified.

If the Panel or the Agency Decision Maker is minded not to recommend approval or recommends termination of approval, applicants are advised that they can request that their case is reconsidered by the Panel or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a review of their case.

9.1 **Representations/ Independent Review Procedure:**

* If at Stage Two of the assessment process, the Agency Decision Maker gives a Qualifying Determination that he/she proposed not to approve the applicants as foster carers, the applicant will be advised that if he or she wishes to challenge the decision, they have a right to submit representations within 28 days of the date of the written notice of the decision to the Agency Decision Maker. In addition, as an alternative, they may exercise the right to apply to the Secretary of State to request a review of the decision by an Independent Review Panel under the Independent Review Mechanism. Any such application must be made in writing within 28 days of the decision and supported by reasons.

* The foster carer will not have the right to request a review by an Independent Review Panel if he or she is regarded as disqualified as a result of a conviction or caution for a specified offence as described in the Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure as explained below:

**A person is disqualified from acting as a foster carer for the agency (unless a relative of the child or already acting as a foster carer) if they or any adult member of the household has been cautioned for or convicted of a specified offence committed at the age of 18 or over or has been cautioned for or convicted of an offence specified in paragraph 1 of part 2 of Schedule 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 committed at the age of 18 or over OR falls within paragraph 2 or 3 of Part 2 of Schedule 4, notwithstanding that the offences listed have been repealed. A specified offence is defined as an offence against a child*, an offence specified in Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, the importation/possession of indecent photographs of a child under 16 and any other offence which involves bodily injury to a child (other than common assault or battery).*

**A list of these offences is set out in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, except that it does not include an offence contrary to section 9 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (sexual activity with a child) where the offender was under 20 when the offence was committed and the child was aged 13 or over.*

- * Where it is decided at Stage One of the assessment process that the applicant is not suitable to become a foster carer, there is no right to have the case reviewed under the Independent Review Mechanism.
- * If no written representations or notification of a request for a review are received within this period, the Agency Decision Maker will decide whether or not to approve the applicant as a foster carer (following a full assessment) or continue the assessment (following a Brief Report)
- * If written representations are received within the period, the Panel Advisor will arrange for the reports and other documentation to be reconsidered by the Fostering Panel, taking into account the written representations, and make a new recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.
- * The Panel Administrator will advise the applicant within 7 days of the date of the panel meeting when they can attend and their written representations will be considered.
- * If applicants wish they can bring a supporter with them to panel. It must be made clear to them that information discussed in panel must be kept confidential and that the applicant is content that information about them may be shared with the supporter present.
- * The Panel Chair will always advise applicants of panel's recommendation and the evidence that underpins this. After considering the representations, the panel will make a recommendation, which the Agency Decision Maker will consider before a final decision is made.
- * If the decision remains not to approve the application, the manager will arrange for the applicants to be informed verbally within 2 working days. Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must be sent to the applicant by the Panel Advisor within 7 working days of the panel meeting. Information about the Complaints Procedure must also be sent. A copy of the report to the panel, the panel's recommendation and the decision, with reasons, must be retained on the applicant's case file.
- * If the applicant decides to refer the matter to an Independent Review, the relevant panel reports, any new information obtained since the panel meeting, a record of the decision made and reasons, a copy of the written notification of the decision and a copy of the panel minute, if different, will be sent to the Independent Review within 10 working days of their written request.
- * The applicant and two representatives of the fostering agency will be invited to attend the Independent Review.
- * After considering the representations, the Independent Review may make a recommendation, which the Agency Decision Maker will consider before a final decision is made.
- * Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must be sent to the applicant within 7 working days of the receipt of the Independent Review recommendation. In these circumstances Herefordshire Fostering Service recommend that Foster Carers make use of The Fostering Network's Independent Support Service as early as possible.
- * Where the decision is to approve the application, the procedure following approval will be followed with a new Foster Carer Agreement signed and kept on the Foster carer's file.

10.0 Supervision, Training, Support and Development for Foster Carers.

10.1 Supervision:

- Temporary foster carers are supported and supervised by their assessing social worker during the assessment process. Approved foster carers are allocated to a supervising social worker who supports and supervises the carer and their family. The Fostering Supervising Social Worker's role includes; providing regular formal supervision; working with each member of the fostering household, including birth children, to support carers in all aspects of their fostering role; helping foster carers in their liaison with other teams within Children and Families Services as well as with other agencies. This supervision is underpinned by relevant legislation, the National Minimum standards and the Fostering Regulations.
- Formal supervision will take place with every approved foster carer at least 4 weekly for the first year and then once in 6 weeks. There will be a minimum of one unannounced visit in a year. Should the need arise the Fostering social worker will visit more frequently than the minimum requirement. This will allow them the time to develop meaningful relationships and to respond when challenges arise.
- During these visits Fostering Supervising Social Workers will read the daily logs/ notes completed by the foster carers concerning the children in placement and discuss any matters arising. It is expected that Foster carers and the Supervising Social Workers are observant of any health and safety, child protection, and standards of care issues which need to be addressed. It is expected that Training needs and support is evaluated in supervision sessions and annual reviews. Personal and professional development forms an integral part of the Foster carers' supervision. Supervision notes are recorded and will be kept on their file, signed by the carer and the Fostering Supervising Social Worker.
- Foster carers are provided with information about the children placed with them and expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As an agency we maintain records on both foster carers and Looked after Children who are subject to national standards and Data Protection legislation. Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

10.2 Training:

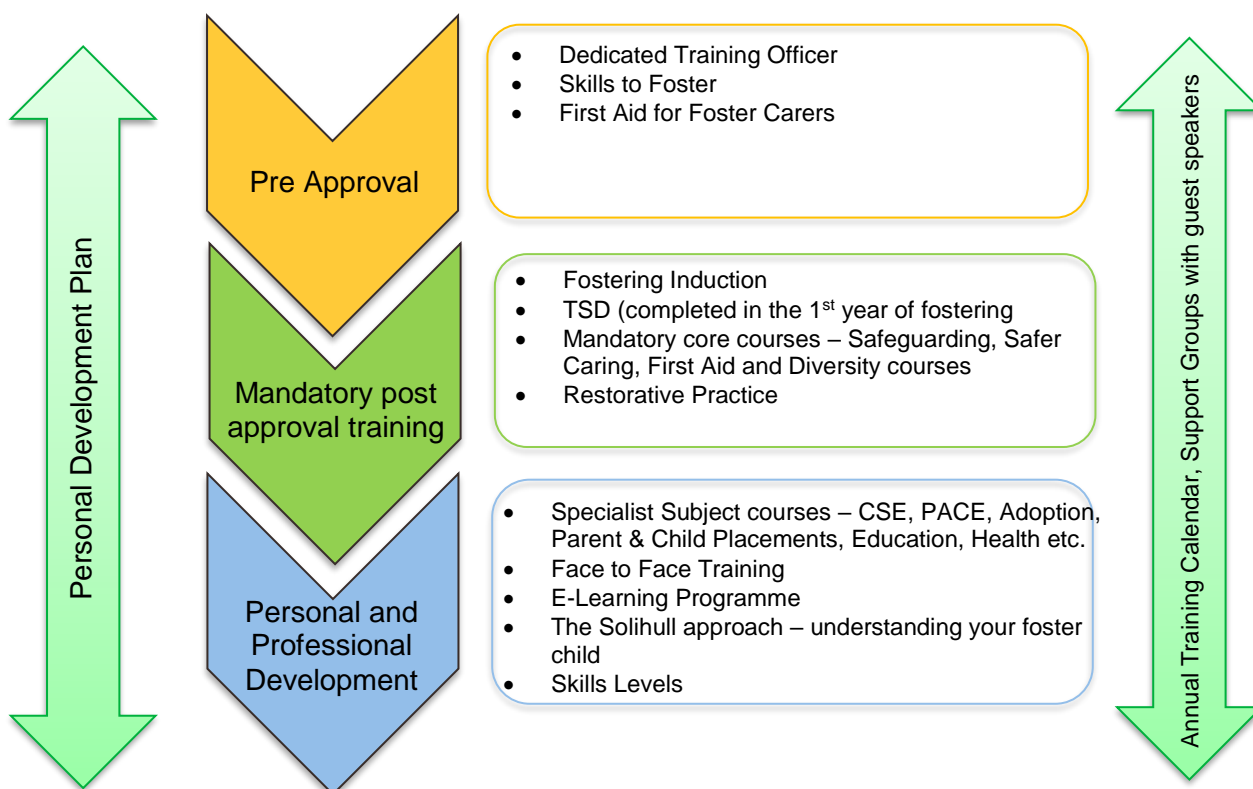
- The Fostering Service must ensure that Foster Carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of each child placed in their care. Training is not an option but a clear expectation of all carers and is evaluated in supervision sessions and annual reviews. Personal and professional development is a requirement for continued approval. The Fostering social workers' role is to support, identify and address the foster carer's training needs.
- Carers are supported and assisted by supervising social workers to manage the complexities of caring for a looked after child which includes support to attend any professional meetings, advice and guidance on attachment issues, managing difficult behaviour and placement issues. Supervising social workers will help carers to manage contact issues with birth families and support any contact where appropriate.
- Herefordshire will provide a wide range of bespoke training opportunities to support and develop Foster Carers, from the pre-approval period to the first year of fostering and beyond. Herefordshire will deliver regular training sessions locally from familiar venues within the community, ensuring easier accessibility.
- Training is delivered by Herefordshire's experienced Social Workers and trainers will use their diverse range of skills and knowledge to provide an engaging and thought-provoking training so that Foster carers can get the best out of the learning programmes. Herefordshire has a designated Training Officer and the service can adapt the courses to meet Herefordshire' Foster carers' specific requirements. Additionally, Herefordshire commission training from experts in the field, enabling a broader range of training topics to

give Foster carers a full knowledge of fostering. Please see Appendix 1 for training requirement & opportunities.

10.3 **Professional Development for Foster carers:**

- All children in care have experienced trauma and require skilled, therapeutic parenting from emotionally resilient and reflective Foster Carers. In addition, Foster Carers must understand a wide range of issues such as the impact of discrimination; the importance of the child's ongoing relationship with their birth family; how to work effectively with others in the child's network; etc. Parenting any child is demanding work, being a Foster Carer adds many more layers of complexity.
- The provision of good quality pre and post approval training for Foster Carers is, therefore, vital. Herefordshire provides a wide range of learning opportunities to enable Foster Carers to be effective in their role. It is an expectation that Herefordshire Foster Carers are committed to and take responsibility for their ongoing personal development throughout their time as registered Foster Carers. When fostering as part of a couple both carers must engage with personal development, even when there are clearly defined 'primary' and 'secondary' carer arrangements within a household. Both carers are expected to complete four pieces learning every year and recorded in their PDP.

Learning & Development Pathway for Foster Carers

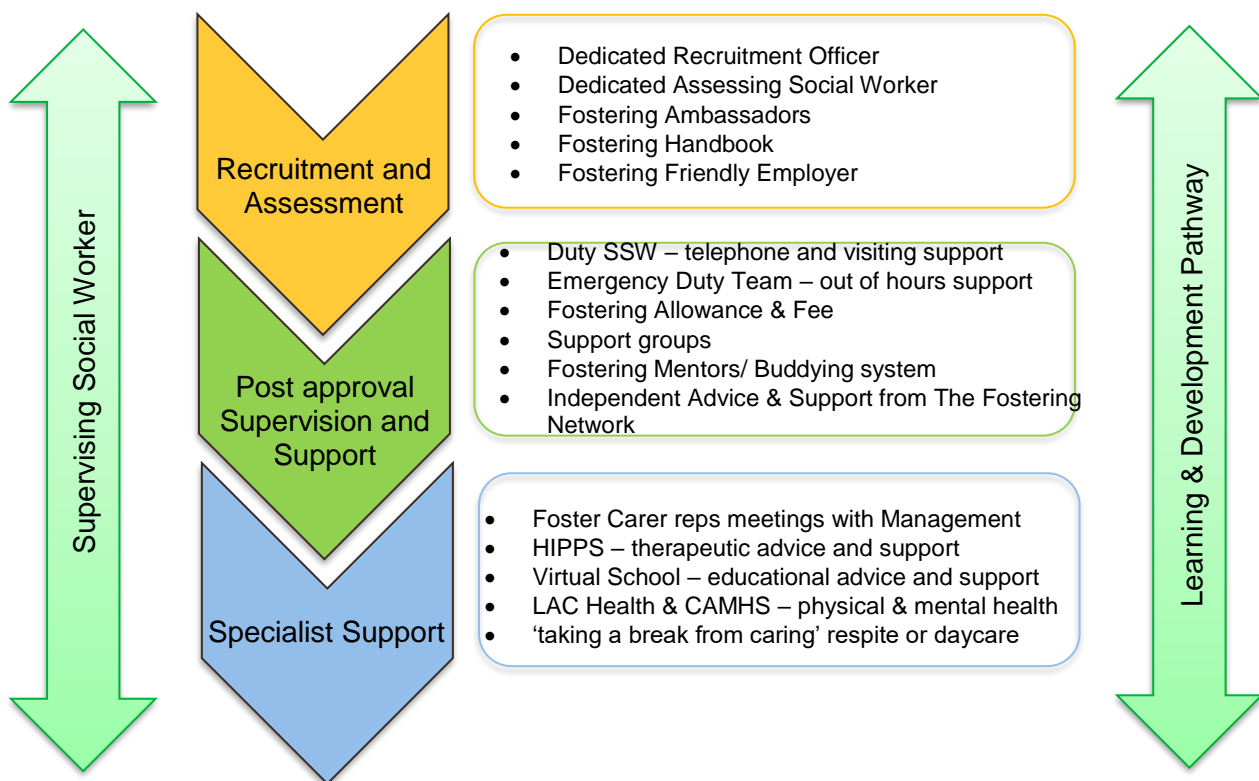


10.4 **Support:**

- Herefordshire Foster carers are supported through a number of key relationships and support functions which are described below.

- The role of the Fostering Supervising Social Worker is to provide support and supervision to the Foster Carer household. They are a crucial link between the carer and the child's Social Worker. There is a supervision policy for Foster Carers. Supervision takes place 4 weekly in the first year and then once in 6 weeks and includes a focus on personal development.
- The child's Social Worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child within one week of placement and thereafter at a minimum of six weekly intervals until a child is confirmed as being in their permanent placement when a three monthly visiting pattern may be appropriate. However in most circumstances the visiting pattern will be more frequent and determined by an individual child's needs.
- All Foster Carers receive a handbook which details local policy, information about fostering terms and conditions and guidance about requirements concerning the care and control of children and other procedures. The service continues to provide an electronic newsletter which remains the preferred generic communication method between the fostering service and foster carers. This allows Herefordshire to disseminate information, including training events and dates, social events, good news stories and best practice information to the majority of our foster carers. Those without email or who chose not to receive emails are provided with a copy of the newsletter via their Supervising Social Worker. Fostering households have access to secure sites such as Whatsapp to share general information and offer support to one another.
- A mother and toddler group for carers with under five year olds also meet weekly to enable carers and young children have social interaction.
- Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) is a dedicated friendly, creative team of professionals from psychology, education, social care, fostering and youth work and work with children and young people aged 7-18 years with complex needs. They provide Therapeutic foster care to children and young people who have experienced significant trauma in their lives, an opportunity to overcome adversity and have the chance to form stable and secure relationships with their carers and fulfil their potential.
- Herefordshire Council has a membership with The Fostering Network paid for by the Council. The Fostering Network provides newsletters and regular information, consultation, updates on national developments and training. A helpline is available to members on 020 7401 9582 from 10.00am - 3.00pm Monday to Friday or you can email them at info@fostering.net
- The Fostering Network offer support in any situation and the typical queries could be around, Bereavement, Bullying & Harassment, Changes at work, Confidence, Discrimination, Family conflicts, Financial concerns, Relationship difficulties, Stress, Work/life etc. They further offer a completely confidential stress support service on 01384 885734. For more details [see information sheet here](#).
- The Fostering Network also provides independent support for foster Carers if there has been an allegation against them. All Herefordshire Foster Carers facing an allegation can access independent support, via their supervising social worker. The Fostering Network will allocate an independent support worker within a day or two to provide their expertise and guidance until the allegation or complaint against is resolved. They also offer a 24-hour legal helpline for expert advice on allegations and help with any legal queries on 01384 885734. Find out more about [The Fostering Network's independent support service](#).

Support offer to Herefordshire Foster Carers



11.0 Assessment of Foster Carers' ongoing suitability to care for children & Annual reviews:

- Every Fostering Household needs to have an annual review. They are also held when there has been a significant change of circumstances or when an allegation or standard of concerns are raised about the care a Foster Carer has provided.
- The Fostering Household Review analyses feedback from as many people as possible including; the Foster Carer; the Supervising Social worker; Children in Care and their parents; the Child's social worker and the child's Independent Reviewing Officer; relevant health and education professionals, this provides a breadth of information to facilitate explorative discussions and will inform recommendations. It also ensures that all statutory safeguarding checks have been undertaken, for example; that each member of the fostering household continue to hold a clear DBS; unannounced home visits have been carried out; a home Health and Safety check has been carried out etc. DBS checks will be renewed every 3 years (or earlier if required). Other checks may be carried out at point of Review if necessary.
- The service is supported by a dedicated Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer who chairs all face to face annual reviews with carers except for the 1st and 4th annual reviews which are presented to Fostering Panel. In addition, change in approvals or significant changes in the fostering household, post-allegation and standards of care concern reviews are presented to the FIRO first for review, and then to the Fostering Panel to ensure robust review. The FIRO provides a high level of appropriate independent scrutiny and quality control of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service to support the Fostering household, as well as the work undertaken by Foster Carers.
- A review meeting is attended by the Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker and

Fostering IRO. This meeting explores the Foster Carer's experiences of fostering each child, how each member of the household is contributing to the fostering task, whether they are receiving the support they need from their SSW and the Fostering Service; any issues and concerns that have arisen and whether the Foster Carer's terms approval remains appropriate.

- Any issues identified by the FIRO is raised with the Foster Carer, Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the Team Manager.
- Reviews that go to panel will follow the Fostering Panel process as laid out in sec. 9 of this statement.
- The Head of Service has monthly meetings with the FIRO and Service Manager and discusses themes and issues.

11.1 **Management role in quality assurance of Foster Carers:**

The Service Manager monitors a range of matters identified in the National Minimum Standards 2011 (Regulation 35 (1)) to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the service is developing to meet the needs of a range of children. Reports are submitted on a quarterly basis to the executive to monitor service development.

In future the service aims to undertake regular quality audits at key stages in a Foster Carer's career. These are to ensure compliance with procedures and policy and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention of the Supervising Social Worker.

12.0 **Compliments, Complaints, Allegations, Regulatory/ Monitoring:**

12.1 Herefordshire is committed to providing high quality services at all times. Our staff and partners work hard to get things right, but sometimes things do go wrong. Herefordshire Council strives to do better and welcome any compliment and complaint that gives feedback about an overall service, department or individual member of staff.

12.2 Herefordshire Council want everyone to be satisfied with the service they receive from the Fostering Service, however if anyone is dissatisfied with the service they receive the can follow the formal complaint procedure.



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orm_2023.pdf



Complaints_Form_Ea
sy_Read_2023.pdf

12.3 Young people can also enlist the assistance of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Worker. Please see section 13.0.

12.4 All Foster Carers have access to support and information regarding the complaints procedures and at the point of any investigation, support can also be accessed through membership of Fostering Network; the cost for which will be met by the agency. The details on how to make a complaint in the Fostering Handbook.

12.5 Foster Carers can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with the Herefordshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership child protection procedures with all allegations managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. In addition to the role of the Supervising Social Worker, Foster Carers have access to an Independent Social Worker via The Fostering Network who can offer practical and emotional support. All allegations and other matters are monitored by

the manager who ensures that these are retained for agencies to view as appropriate. For more [information please see details here.](#)

12.6 Herefordshire Fostering Service produce quarterly and annual reports. These are presented to the lead member of the Council along with the Senior Management Team at the Corporate Parenting Panel who act for the executive. Details of emerging themes relating to the service are considered within the fortnightly management meetings.

12.7 Other monitoring includes staff supervision linked to the appraisal system, formal supervisions to foster carers, annual reviews, fostering panel, feedback from training sessions, case recording and practise audits.

12.8 The Fostering Service is also subject to formal inspection by Ofsted and inspections usually take place every three years.

13.0 Advocacy and Children's Rights:

13.1 Advocacy is a way of supporting and enabling young people to express their views, wishes, feelings and concerns. An advocate is someone who provides advocacy support when you need and ask for it. An advocate might help you access information you need or go with you to meetings, in a supportive role. You may want your advocate to write letters on your behalf, or speak for you in situations where you don't feel able to speak for yourself.

13.2 Hear Me is the advocacy service for children and young people in Herefordshire. It provides a professional, [confidential and independent](#) service for children and young people when they need support in representing their views with the local authority. An advocate can support with a particular issue, difficulty or complaint, and then will not contact the young person again unless the child needs help with another issue.

13.3 For help and support, contact the Hear Me service using the details below.



Telephone: [01432 383113](tel:01432383113) and hear-me@herefordshire.gov.uk

13.4 Independent visitor:

13.5 Herefordshire Council encourages children and young people to access support from The National Youth Advocacy Service for support and Independent Visitor Service. An Independent Visitor is an adult who volunteers to spend time with the child and is Independent of the Local Authority. They are someone the child can rely on and share their views, wishes and feelings with and they can advocate on behalf of the child.



For more details: <https://www.nyas.net/> and Helpline: 0808 808 1001

14.0 Equality and Diversity:

14.1 Herefordshire Fostering Service works to the Herefordshire Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which is available on the council's website.

14.2 Herefordshire Council will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the fostering approval process. Applicants wishing to be approved as Foster Carers will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation or disability providing the Fostering Service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence.

14.3 Herefordshire Council will endeavour and make every attempt to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability.

15.0 Post SGO support and Private Fostering Service: Post SGO support is provided by the Permanence Support team. The team has a SGO support line 01432 383184. The Permanence team e-mail address is Permanenceteamfostering@herefordshire.gov.uk

15.1 Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 years old - or under 18 if they have a disability - lives with someone for 28 days or more who is not a close relative, guardian, or person with parental responsibility. The operational responsibility lies with the Child and Assessment Team whilst the Fostering Service offers support and guidance.

16.0 Further Information

16.1 Approval and Review of Statement of Purpose; This Statement of Purpose has been formally reviewed and up dated as of September 2023. It has been/will be distributed to the following agencies/departments as required:

- OFSTED.
- The Herefordshire Council Website.
- Foster Carers.
- A children's version has been produced for dissemination to all children using the service.

If you require this document in a different language or an alternative format such as large print, audio tape or Braille, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team on diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk

A copy can also be obtained from the registered manager:

Title; Valerie Williams
Address; 1 Plough Lane Hereford HR4 0LE
Phone Number; 07792881341/01432 383214

Contact Details of OFSTED:

Piccadilly Gate 4
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Appendix 1

The training programme currently offers the following workshops

- Diversity
- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Induction
- Solihull 12 week
- Legal
- Healthy Matters – (age related)
- Education
- Attachment
- Record Keeping and Reflective practices
- Safe Caring
- Behaviour Management
- Working as part of a team
- Life story work and Memory box
- Contact
- Domestic Abuse
- Improved Economic Wellbeing for Looked After Children
- Drug awareness
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome disorder
- ADHD and Autistic Spectrum – when available from partner agencies
- Social Networking
- Parent and Child Placements
- Alcohol Awareness
- Sexual Health Awareness
- Allegations
- Moving Children Onto Adoption
- Prevent
- Data Protection
- Family Finding
- SELFIE – Sexual Exploitation
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Appropriate Adult
- Positive Handling
- Impact of Domestic Violence
- Sexual Abuse.
- Pathway planning for older teens
- Attachment in teens & Trauma Attachment and Learning
- Dealing with Anger
- Appropriate adult training
- Hidden Minorities
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Training
- Practice Issues Group
- Memory Box
- Gypsy and Traveller Children

- E safety and social media
- Self care and wellbeing for Foster carers
- Emotion Coaching
- Literacy Difficulties and Dyslexia
- Attention Concentration and ADHD
- TISS – bespoke training – working with families, sexualised behaviour, therapeutic play, self
- harm, child development and working with challenging behaviour
- NYAS advocacy
- Forum – annual
- Virtual conferences