



Independent
Foster Care
Services



Statement of Purpose



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Section 01

Introduction

- 1.1 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 require all fostering agencies to have a clear Statement of Purpose detailing the aims and objectives of the fostering service, and how the agency intends to ensure those aims and objectives will be met.
- 1.2 This document is the Statement of Purpose for Independent Foster Care Services, and is one of a collection of documents (Children and Young People Guides; IFCS Procedure Manual; IFCS website; and the IFCS Business Plan), which attempt to detail the aims and objectives of IFCS, how IFCS propose to meet these, and how these will be resourced.

- 1.3 The wide availability of the Statement of Purpose, and other IFCS documents, require them to be accessible, informative and used as tools to measure the performance of Independent Foster Care Services. This document is available in Welsh and English in printed booklets and in downloadable pdf formats from the Independent Foster Care Services website.
- 1.4 Independent Foster Care Services views this Statement of Purpose as a live document against which we must be constantly measured and kept under review. Independent Foster Care Services is committed to this process and will facilitate and welcome views and feelings on our performance from all we have given a commitment to through this Statement of Purpose.

Section 02

Status and Constitution

- 2.1 IFCS is an independent fostering agency and a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company No. 4645203).
- 2.2 The Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales registered us as a fostering agency on the 16th August 2004.
- 2.3 The Managing Director of IFCS is Adrian Wilson, who also acts as the Business Manager, and who in consultation with Foster Carers, the staff team, Local Authorities, other community organisations

- and young people placed in foster care with us, has overall responsibility for ensuring that the aims and objectives contained within this Statement of Purpose are achieved in practice.
- 2.4 As Managing Director Adrian Wilson also has statutory duties and responsibilities placed upon him as the head of a limited company and has overall responsibility for ensuring the aims and objectives of the business are met within a sound financial structure. A Business Plan underpins this structure and ensures that the commitments made in this Statement of Purpose can be resourced through modest and safe growth.
- 2.5 IFCS has been registered with the Criminal Records Bureau and Adrian Wilson is the registered lead signatory.
- 2.6 As the Business Manager, Adrian Wilson is the 'responsible individual' appointed by the 'registered provider' (IFCS Ltd), who is responsible for supervising the management of the agency.
- 2.7 IFCS acts as an efficient unit in which close communication, effective response and partnership can be facilitated between staff, Foster Carers, children and young people, parents, Local Authorities and other community organisations and professionals.



Section 03

Management & Staff Roles

3.1 Structure

- 3.1.1 The management and staff structure of IFCS develops through the Business Plan to ensure the commitments made in this Statement of Purpose can be delivered.

3.2 Business Manager & Director

- 3.2.1 The Business Manager and Director of IFCS is Adrian Wilson who has responsibility for supervising the management of the agency (and is therefore the line manager and supervisor of the Service Manager), ensuring the procedures detailed in the IFCS Procedure Manual are kept to, ensuring the aims and objectives outlined in the Statement of Purpose are effectively met within a sound financial structure, and for ensuring compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and The Fostering Services (Wales)



Regulations 2003.

- 3.2.2 The practice of Adrian Wilson is ultimately assessed and judged by the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

- 3.2.3 Adrian Wilson is the owner and sole share holder of IFCS.

3.3 Service Manager

- 3.3.1 The Service Manager for IFCS is Gail Tobin who has responsibility for the management of the fostering service, and is the line manager and supervisor of the two Deputy Service Managers, the Placements Manager and Deputy Placements Manager, the Recruitment and Development Manager and the Office Manager.

3.4 Deputy Service Managers

- 3.4.1 The Deputy Service Managers are essentially the assistant managers to the Service Manager in all matters relating to the day to day fostering service provided by IFCS. Their role involves managing and supervising the two Social Work and Support Teams within IFCS, and taking day to day decisions in respect of supporting foster carers and the children and young people they look after.
- 3.4.2 The Deputy Service Managers are mostly office based, but also provides managerial support for workers out of office hours at times, on a rota basis.
- 3.4.3 The Deputy Service Managers are supervised by the Service Manager.

3.5 Recruitment and Development Manager

- 3.5.1 The Recruitment and Development Manager is responsible for recruitment of prospective foster carers, carrying out initial assessments of such carers, and jointly delivering and ensuring the quality of training, preparation and assessment of prospective carers. The Recruitment and Development Manager supervises all external consultants carrying out Form F assessments for IFCS, and ensures that their work is of a high standard.

- 3.5.2 The Recruitment and Development Manager also supports a small number of foster carers, and provides managerial support for workers out of office hours at times, on a rota basis.

- 3.5.3 The Recruitment and Development Manager is supervised by the Service Manager.

3.6 Placements Manager

- 3.6.1 The Placements Manager has responsibility for completing Matching and Risk Assessments in response to referrals for placements, liaising and consulting with foster carers and Local Authorities on placement referrals, and arranging all necessary support when a child or young person is placed.

- 3.6.2 The Placements Manager has responsibility for providing managerial support to staff out of office hours, both directly and indirectly through the rota.

- 3.6.3 The Placements Manager is supervised by the Service Manager.

3.7 Deputy Placements Manager

- 3.7.1 The Deputy Placements Manager assist the Placements Manager in completing Matching and Risk Assessments in response to referrals for placements, liaising and consulting with foster carers and Local Authorities on placement referrals, and arranging all necessary support when a child or young person is placed.

- 3.7.2 The Deputy Placements Manager has responsibility for providing managerial support to staff out of office hours, both directly and indirectly through the rota.

- 3.7.3 The Deputy Placements Manager is supervised by the Service Manager.

3.8 Office Manager

- 3.8.1 The Office Manager has responsibility for ensuring all the foster carers are paid correctly and on time, for recording all income and expenditure (and for liaising with the company Accountant in carrying this task), for the purchase of all necessary office equipment and stationary, and for the formal and informal supervision of the admin section to ensure all post, file management, typing and reception tasks are completed correctly.

- 3.8.2 The Office Manager will formally and informally supervise all Admin Officers, and will be supervised by the Service Manager.

3.9 Deputy Office Manager

- 3.9.1 The Deputy Office Manager has responsibility for assisting the Office Manager in ensuring all the foster carers are paid correctly and on time, for recording all income and expenditure (and for liaising with the company Accountant in carrying this task), for the purchase of all necessary office equipment and stationary, and for providing informal supervision, advice and guidance to the admin section to ensure all post, file management, typing and reception tasks are completed correctly.
- 3.9.2 The Deputy Office Manager will be supervised by the Office Manager.



3.10 Social Workers

- 3.10.1 The Social Workers for IFCS have specific roles for completing assessments of prospective Foster Carers, for providing support for the Foster Carers, for supporting the placement of children and young people, for providing out of hours support, and when necessary carrying out direct support work with children and young people in our care. IFCS will recruit social work staff to maintain a high level of support for children and young people and foster carers.
- 3.10.2 Social Workers will be supervised by the Deputy Service Managers.

3.11 Family Support Workers

- 3.11.1 The Family Support Workers for IFCS have specific roles for supporting the placements of children and young people, facilitating contact with parents, working directly with children and young people, and providing office and out of office hours support for Foster Carers.
- 3.11.2 Support Workers will be supervised by the Deputy Service Managers.

3.12 Admin Officers

- 3.12.1 The Admin Officers are responsible for filing, typing and reception tasks, and will be the first point of contact for all contacting IFCS. The Admin Officers are also responsible for constructing the various pamphlets and books published by IFCS, and for making up the Children and Young People's Packs and Foster Carers boxes.

- 3.12.2 The Admin Officers are supervised, both formally and informally, by the Office Manager.

3.13 Consultants

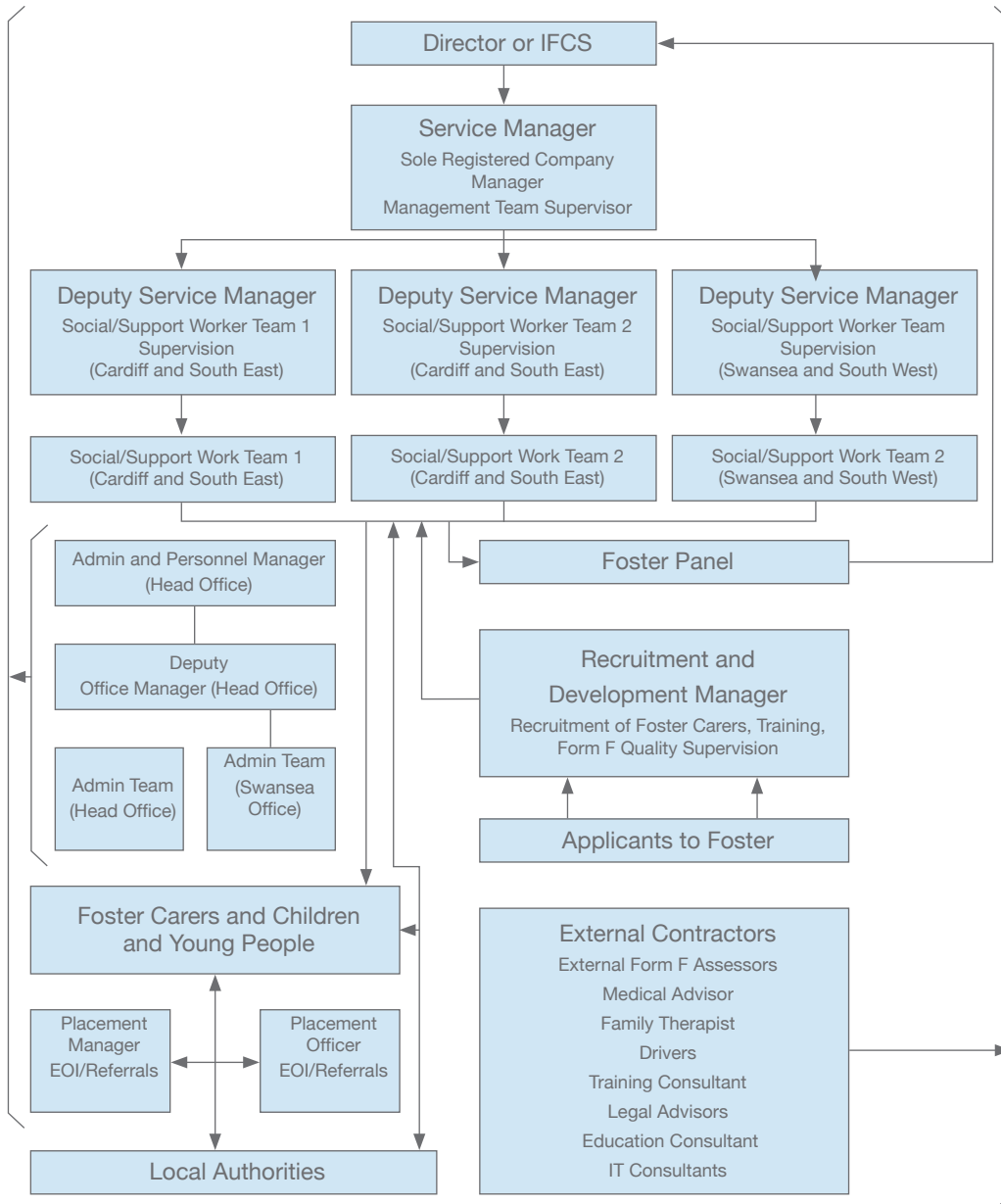
- 3.13.1 The five Consultants engaged by IFCS are not employees, but are contracted to carry out specific work paid for on an invoice basis.
- 3.13.2 The Medical Advisor scrutinises all medicals prospective foster carers have as part of the assessment process, and provides a final recommendation to the IFCS Panel in respect of how their health may affect their capacity to care for looked after children and young people.
- 3.13.3 There are two Legal Advisors, the first advises IFCS on all matters relating to child care, and the second provides commercial advice to the company.
- 3.13.4 The Independent Family Therapist provides advice and guidance to IFCS staff and foster carers on how best to care for, and meet the needs of, individual children and young people. The Family Therapist will not work directly with looked after children and young people, unless specifically requested to do so by the responsible Local Authority. The Family Therapist can also provide advice and guidance in respect of foster carers own children if required.
- 3.13.5 The Education Consultant provides advice, guidance and practical support for IFCS staff and foster carers to ensure looked after children and young people are enrolled in and attend school



- 3.13.6 The Training Consultant provides advice and guidance to IFCS on all matters relating to training, and also directly delivers training to approved and prospective foster carers.
- 3.13.7 IFCS also contracts drivers, IT consultants and external Support Workers as required.

Section 04

IFCS Company Structure



Section 05

Services Provided

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Promoting the welfare of children and young people is the paramount consideration for IFCS. The services we provide are wholly based on this essential principle.
- 5.1.2 By listening extremely carefully to children and young people, our Foster Carers and Local Authorities IFCS has always been able to maintain and improve high quality and well resourced services.
- 5.1.3 Following considerable and successful growth IFCS has restructured charges to achieve better value and quality for the public money spent by Local Authorities. Children and young

- 5.1.4 IFCS now have no "High Need" or "Single Placement" charge, although still provide the high quality services required for children and young people with significant needs. The emphasis has changed from additional charges to careful and more selective matching to meet higher levels of need.
- 5.1.5 IFCS has also changed the age range for a third time for foster placements qualifying for a lower weekly charge. Initially the qualifying age range was children under 2 years, then under 5 years, now the placements of all children

placed under 8 years qualify for a reduced weekly rate.

5.1.6 Like many fostering agencies IFCS has significantly lower rates for siblings placed together. However, IFCS also charge this reduced sibling rate for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the UK, whether any relationship or not can be determined at the time of placement. This reflects the special circumstances in which such children arrive, and the importance of the ethnic, cultural and emotional bonds between them.

5.1.7 These efficiency and quality of service improvements, which also include a significantly lower charge for children placed on a long term basis and for young people aged over 18 years, have been made in the context of IFCS increasing payments to our Foster Carers and strengthening our Social Work and Support Team.

5.2 Weekly Charges

Standard Charge for Children and Young People over 8 years: £829.81 per week

Standard Charge for Children under 8 years: **£642.97 per week**

Standard Charge for Young Adult over 18 years: **£535.50 per week**

Standard Charge for Mother and Baby (both mother and baby must be under 18 years): **£829.81 per week** for Mother, **£642.97 per week** for Baby

Standard charge for Sibling Groups in the same Foster Placement: 1st Child **£829.81** (over

8 years) / **£642.97** (under 8 years)

2nd Child **£513.61**

3rd Child **£513.61**

Standard Charge for Respite: Charged at a daily rate of one seventh the standard weekly charge.

Standard Charge for children and Young People placed on a Long Term basis: **£740.01**

The IFCS definition of “Long Term” is a child or young person who has been with our Foster Carers for at least 6 months continuously and whose Care Plan has been confirmed as “Long Term Foster Care” at a Statutory Review. Were such a qualification is confirmed for a child under 8 years or for a sibling the lower price remains.

5.3 IFCS Services Included in the above Charges

Services include everything required by partner Local Authorities through contractual obligations. However, IFCS provide additional and strengthened services (for no extra charge) which are detailed below:

- A large and committed staff team providing constant support for Foster Carers and children and young people.
- Highly resourced and staffed out of office hours support for Foster Carers and children and young people.
- Extra allowances for children and young people to promote welfare and self esteem, through



leisure activities, education and achievements in the community.

- Provision of alternative education for children and young people excluded from school.
- Emergency respite care.
- Family contact services, including supervision.
- Support for Foster Carers from a qualified and experienced Family Therapist to assist in best meeting the needs of specific children and young with significant needs.
- Assistance with the purchase of specialist equipment for children and young people with special physical and mobility needs.

In partnership with children and young people, Foster Carers, and Local Authority and other professionals, IFCS will always

strive to provide high quality services with the welfare of children as the central focus and paramount consideration. These services will also be provided in the context of the necessity to provide the best possible value for public money.

Section 06

Aims and Objectives

- 6.1 Independent Foster Care Services (IFCS) is committed to providing high quality foster family care for children and young people placed with us.
- 6.2 In partnership with placing Local Authorities IFCS will seek to offer a holistic foster care service which will include assessment of the needs of children and young people and their families, therapeutic and educational support, the promotion of play, contact support, clear and easy to use services to allow children and young people to express their views, and highly supported quality foster care.
- 6.3 IFCS aims to achieve the provision of high quality foster family care for children and young people by: having clear recruitment procedures; completing detailed assessments of prospective Foster Carers; providing ongoing and relevant training for Foster Carers; providing twenty-four hours a day – 365 days a year support to Foster Carers from a qualified Social Worker; providing specialist advice and consultation from a qualified Therapist to Foster Carers when looking after children and young people with significant needs; ensuring the constant availability of emergency and planned respite care; careful matching in consultation with Foster Carers; and a realistic level of financial support to Foster Carers which recognises and

values the essential importance of their difficult role.

- 6.4 IFCS greatly respects the service provided by Foster Carers. To ensure this service is positive for all, IFCS has detailed and clear procedures, which together with regular telephone contacts and weekly visits from IFCS staff, as well as regular support group meetings, ongoing training, supervision, and annual reviews, will ensure Foster Cares are never isolated in their essential role, and that the quality of the service provided is always ensured.
- 6.5 IFCS aims to create partnerships with all those who are contributing to the provision of positive outcomes for children and young people in foster care. To achieve this aim IFCS will promote a variety of easy, comfortable and secure methods of communication, including email, between children and young people, foster carers, placing Local Authorities, IFCS staff, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales.
- 6.6 The IFCS website will allow children and young people and their Foster Carers to be placed in a closed and secure email communication loop with all relevant professionals.
- 6.7 IFCS aims to provide Foster Carers and children and young people with specialist therapeutic support, from a qualified Therapist, when required. The objective is to maintain placement stability for children and young people

with significant needs, and ensure Foster Carers are provided with all necessary knowledge to equip them to meet these needs.

- 6.8 IFCS will always provide a high numbers of qualified social work support staff to Foster Carers and the children and young people they look after. This will allow IFCS Social Workers and Family Support Workers to offer a high level of support, directly and through close partnership with other professionals and parents. The pricing structure for IFCS placements is designed to support this high level of support and partnership, without burdening placing Local Authorities with extra hidden costs requiring further management approval. This high level of support provided through simple, clear and transparent costs has been especially effective, as it has allowed front line Local Authority Social Workers with parents to provide quick permissions to IFCS staff seeking to provide services and support to children and young people. Together with the small caseloads within IFCS these quick permissions allow services and support to be provided without unnecessary delay.
- 6.9 IFCS believe that positive development in education is an essential indicator of the quality of foster care provided, and will work in partnership with placing Local Authorities, Foster Carers, children and young people, parents and education professionals to ensure progress in this area.

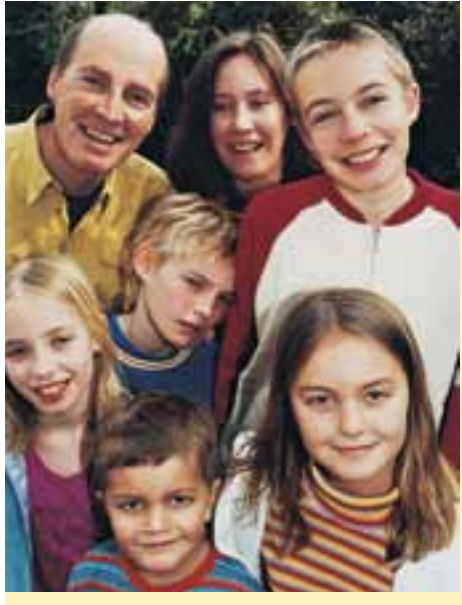


- 6.10 IFCS aims to promote positive leisure and play activities for all children and young people placed in foster care with us. A component of the weekly cost of each foster placement is set aside specifically to promote this essential area of development.
- 6.11 IFCS aims to respect, value and promote the individual backgrounds of all children and young people placed in foster care with this agency. To this end we are committed to recruiting Foster Carers from diverse backgrounds and to ensure that training caters for the needs of all in our communities. These commitments include considerations given to the gender, sexuality, religion and

different abilities of children and young people in foster care.

6.12 IFCS is also committed to training and development, and welcomes Social Work students for DipSW placements. IFCS values the contribution of students on placement, both in terms of the development of social work generally and for the benefit of all involved with the agency.

6.13 In summary, IFCS aim to provide well-trained, well-supported Foster Carers, who will provide stable, safe and quality family care for children and young people. In addition IFCS is committed to ensuring that positive progress and achievement in education, health, and leisure and play are ensured as essential components of the foster family care provided by this agency. Key to achieving these aims and objectives is our commitment to the development and training of all IFCS staff and students on placement with this agency.



Section 07

Foster Carers

7.1 Eligibility Criteria

7.1.1 IFCS have the following eligibility criteria for prospective Foster Carers:

7.1.2 All prospective Foster Carers must be above the age of 21 years old.

7.1.3 At least one Carer in the home, meeting the above age requirement, must be prepared to act as a full time Foster Carer without any other professional commitment.

7.1.4 Prospective Foster Carers must be able to offer children and young people individual bedrooms if required. Children and young people will not always wish to have their own room, but if they do the prospective Foster Carers must have the space to provide it.

7.1.5 Prospective Foster Carers must accept regular telephone contact, at least fortnightly visits, and three monthly Supervision, as well as Annual Reviews and ongoing training, as mandatory requirements.

7.1.6 Prospective Foster Carers must accept annual health reviews, and annual Enhanced Disclosure checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. All adults within the Foster Carer's home must submit to these Enhanced Disclosure checks with the Criminal Records Bureau.

7.1.7 To become approved, prospective Foster Carers must complete an extensive assessment with an IFCS Social Worker, which

will include a health and safety assessment of their home, medical assessment, and Enhanced Disclosure Checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. In addition prospective Foster Carers must complete all Induction Training Courses, before being considered for approval as Foster Carers.

7.1.8 Prospective Foster Carers who smoke will not be allowed to foster very young children, and all carers who smoke will be discouraged from doing so.

7.1.9 Prospective Foster Carers must value the ethnic and cultural diversity of all children and young people, and their families, and must positively promote the individual identities, abilities and welfare of those children and young people they look after.

7.1.10 Prospective Foster Carers must be prepared to look after all ages of children and young people, though they will always have the final say on accepting any child into their home. Consideration will always be given to a Foster Carer's family structure and strengths and weaknesses, but the paramount consideration will be the child's needs not their age.

7.1.11 Foster Carers wishing to provide respite care/short term breaks for children and young people must allow parents to visit their home, and must work in close partnership with parents as required by them and the referring Local Authority.

7.1.12 IFCS have no eligibility criteria in respect of marriage and sexuality,

- and particularly welcomes applications from all ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the UK.
- 7.1.13** All prospective Foster Carers must accept that when looking after vulnerable children and young people the welfare of those children and young people must be the paramount consideration, which informs all actions by Foster Carers and this agency.
- 7.2 Recruitment**
- 7.2.1** There are various ways people may become aware of IFCS and so contact us with a view to becoming foster carers: personal recommendation from an existing Foster Carer; contact with our website, which will contain our Statement of Purpose, information for new carers, and an Initial Application Form; and contact with advertising material.
- 7.2.2** Having received an expression of interest or an Initial Application Form, IFCS will send out the booklet “An Introduction to Foster Fare with IFCS” to the enquirer. An IFCS Social Worker will then contact and make an appointment to visit usually within five working days. The purpose of this first visit is to carry out an Initial Assessment of the prospective foster carers interest in and understanding of the role and our expectations, and of their household structure and resources.
- 7.2.3** The Social Worker will discuss this Initial Assessment with the Service Manager. If judged appropriate
- the Social Worker will contact the prospective foster carers, and invite them to next Skills to Foster Training Course. Following the successful completion of this course the BAAF Form F Assessment will be undertaken.
- 7.2.4** Independent Foster Care Services welcomes all applications from couples and single carers, from all sections of society.
- 7.2.5** Recruitment of foster carers must follow the planned growth of IFCS detailed in the Business Plan.
- 7.3 Assessment and Preparation Process**
- 7.3.1** IFCS Social Workers will usually complete fostering assessments. However, assessments may be completed by external assessors.
- 7.3.2** The structure of the assessments will follow the BAAF Form F1, Parts 1 to 5.
- 7.3.3** IFCS is a registered member of BAAF, and has access to their research and guidance publications on assessment.
- 7.3.4** Prospective Foster Carers and all persons over 16 years of age living within their home will be required to submit to Enhanced Disclosure checks with the Criminal Records Bureau, with which IFCS is registered and the Business Manager is the Lead Signatory. Such checks are essential parts of the assessment process and will be required to be repeated on an annual basis.
- 7.3.5** Prospective Foster Cares will be required to have medical checks as part of the assessment process.
- Medical checks on prospective Foster Carers will be recorded on the BAAF Adult Health Report Form AH. These forms will be submitted to the prospective Foster Carers GP, and when returned completed the forms will be passed to the IFCS Medical Advisor for final comment.
- 7.3.6** Prospective Foster Carers must provide two referees, who must be interviewed by the Social Worker as part of the assessment process.
- 7.3.7** Prospective Foster Carers must submit all documentation relating to their vehicle for inspection by the Social Worker, as part of the assessment process.
- 7.3.8** Prospective Foster Carers must allow an initial general health and safety inspection of their home.
- This may include inspections of gas and electrical appliances to be carried out by qualified engineers. The reports from these inspections will contribute to the assessment process. Further health and safety inspections may be carried out in respect of caravans or second holiday homes, as required.
- 7.3.9** During the home assessment process prospective Foster Carers will be able to discuss the demands, responsibilities, expectations and rewards of the role with a specific experienced Foster Carer, who will act as a mentor during the assessment and for the first 6 months after registration by the IFCS Foster Panel.
- 7.3.10** During the home assessment process prospective Foster Carers will be required to attend Induction Training. All Foster Carers will be required to have completed training in IFCS Policies and Procedures, First Aid, Skills to Foster - A foundation Training Course, which includes Child Protection, Safe Care, Anti Discriminatory Practice in Foster Care, Record Keeping and Child Development before they can be presented to the IFCS Foster Panel. The Social Workers may attend this training and comment on the progress of prospective Foster Carers.
- 7.3.11** Completed Form F assessments will be typed by the Admin Officers, and filed on the relevant prospective Foster Carers records. The Social Worker will show and discuss completed assessments



7.3.12 to/with prospective Foster Carers. IFCS will keep completed Form F assessments confidential, and securely filed on the relevant Foster Carers records. However, these assessments may be disclosed to the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, or to the Police or Social Services carrying out statutory investigations.

7.3.13 Form F assessments and all associated documentation will be submitted to the IFCS Foster Panel for consideration. The IFCS Foster Panel will make recommendations to the Business Manager on the approval or otherwise of the prospective Foster Carers.

7.4 Approval

7.4.1 The Business Manager will not consider any prospective Foster Carer for approval unless they have been the subject of a full assessment, and this assessment has been considered by the Foster Panel.

7.4.2 The Business Manager will not consider any prospective Foster Carer for approval if the Foster Carer has previously been approved by another fostering service provider, and this approval has not yet terminated appropriately.

7.4.3 Subject to the above conditions the Business Manager will consider all recommendations made by the Foster Panel, and will record in writing their approval or otherwise with reasons as appropriate.

7.4.4 The Business Manager will write to all prospective Foster Carers who have been the subject of an assessment and consideration by the Foster Panel, on the same day of the Foster Panel and the completing of relevant minutes.

7.4.5 In approving prospective Foster Carers the Business Manager will write formally to them, detailing the decisions in respect of the recommendations made by the Foster Panel, and the terms of the approval to be contained in the Foster Care Agreement.

7.4.6 If the Business Manager decides not to approve a prospective Foster Carers application and assessment then they will write formally to them, recording in writing their decisions, and enclosing the recommendations of the Foster Panel in the letter. The Business Manager will inform the prospective Foster Carers in the letter that they have 28 days to make further written representations to support any reconsideration of their assessment. If these are received, within the stated timescale they will be considered by the Foster Panel and Business Manager again, and the prospective Foster Carers will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

7.5 Annual Reviews

7.5.1 Foster Carers will receive formal Annual Reviews, which will be attended by themselves, their Social Worker, and the Service Manager or other member of the IFCS management team.

7.5.2 Annual Reviews of Foster Carers will be chaired and recorded by the Service Manager or other member of the IFCS management team.

7.5.3 Annual Reviews will be informed by a summary report, completed by the Social Worker, based on the 3 monthly supervision sessions of the Foster Carer held over the previous 12 months.

7.5.4 Annual Reviews will also be informed by: additional checks with the Criminal Records Bureau of the Foster Carer and all adult members of their household; tax, MOT and insurance documents in respect of Foster Carers motor vehicles; and annual health and safety inspections of the Foster Carers home.

7.5.5 The purpose of the Annual Review will be to positively explore the professional development of the Foster Carer in the last year, formally record this development and any identified strengths, weaknesses, ambitions, concerns and training needs, and construct and record an action plan to promote the continuing development and support of the Foster Carer.

7.5.6 The Service Manager or a Deputy Manager will make a written record of the Annual Review and the resulting action plan, completing the IFCS Annual Review of Foster Carer report. The first annual review report will be submitted to the IFCS Foster Panel, who will consider it and make recommendations in respect of the Foster Carer's approval status and Foster Carer Agreement.

7.5.7 The recommendations of the IFCS Foster Panel will be confirmed by the Business Manager, who will have responsibility for writing to the reviewed Foster Carers with the details of the decisions made, and any consequences for their approval status and Foster Care Agreement.

7.5.8 Foster Carers who have had their approval status restricted or withdrawn as a result of the annual review process, can appeal in writing within 28 days to the Business Manager.

7.6 Training

7.6.1 General Training Principles

7.6.1a Training is necessary to provide and enhance the skills Foster Carer's need to provide high quality care for vulnerable children and young people.

7.6.1b Training must be useful, relevant and based on Foster Carer's assessed needs.

7.6.1c Training must be delivered in a safe, non-threatening and non-discriminatory manner, and must be wholly child centred.

7.6.1d Training must be delivered at times to suit the child care commitments of Foster Carers. When these commitments are so significant that Foster Carers attendance at training is impeded IFCS must provide child care support.

7.6.1e IFCS staff and Foster Carers must attend training together to promote partnership and joint understanding of good practice.

7.6.1f All prospective Foster Carers

must attend Induction Training which is the Skills to Foster – A foundation Training Course, which includes specific elements on child protection, Safe Care, Child Development, Anti-Discriminatory Practice in Foster Care, and Record Keeping, as well as others, before they can be presented to the IFCS Foster Panel. Foster Carers will also be expected to attend a First Aid training course.

7.6.2d Internal courses will be held at either the IFCS Head office at Solva House, Springmeadow Business Park, Wentloog, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 2ES, or the Swansea and West Wales Office, Unit 2 (Block A), Dragon 24, Penllergaer, Swansea, SA4 9HJ.

7.6.3 Further Training Courses

7.6.3a All registered Foster Carers with IFCS must attend further training courses as identified through Supervision and Annual Review, and all must attain the NVQ Level 3 in Child Care. IFCS has engaged an Independent Training Consultant to specifically promote NVQ attainments, and to work with the Recruitment and Development Manager on all other aspects of training. A member of IFCS staff is also qualified as an NVQ Mentor and Assessor.

7.6.1g Travelling expenses of 40 pence per mile, or reimbursement of bus or train fares will be paid to all Foster Carers attending training.

7.6.1h Internal courses will be held at the IFCS offices at Solva House, Springmeadow Business Park, Wentloog, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 2ES.

7.6.2 Induction Training Courses

7.6.2a Induction Training Courses are the minimum training requirements necessary before a prospective Foster Carer can be presented to the IFCS Foster Panel.

7.6.2b The programme of Induction Training Courses is: IFCS Policies and Procedures, Skills to Foster – A foundation Training Course (which includes specific elements on child protection, Safe Care, Child Development, Anti Discriminatory Practice in Foster Care, and Record Keeping, as well as others). Foster Carers will also be expected to attend an essential First Aid training course.

7.6.2c Travelling expenses of 40 pence per mile, or reimbursement of bus or train fares will be paid to all Foster Carers attending training.



7.6.3b Travelling expenses of 40 pence per mile, or reimbursement of bus or train fares will be paid to all Foster Carers attending training.

7.6.3c Internal courses will be held at the IFCS offices at Solva House, Springmeadow Business Park, Wentloog, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 2ES.

7.6.4 Evaluation

7.6.4a At the end of every course all those participating will be given an Evaluation Sheet, which they will be asked to complete.

7.6.4b The completed Evaluation Sheets will be examined at the IFCS Staff Team Meeting, who will make recommendations on any changes to courses as a result.

7.6.4c The Service Manager will make the final decisions on any recommended changes to courses.

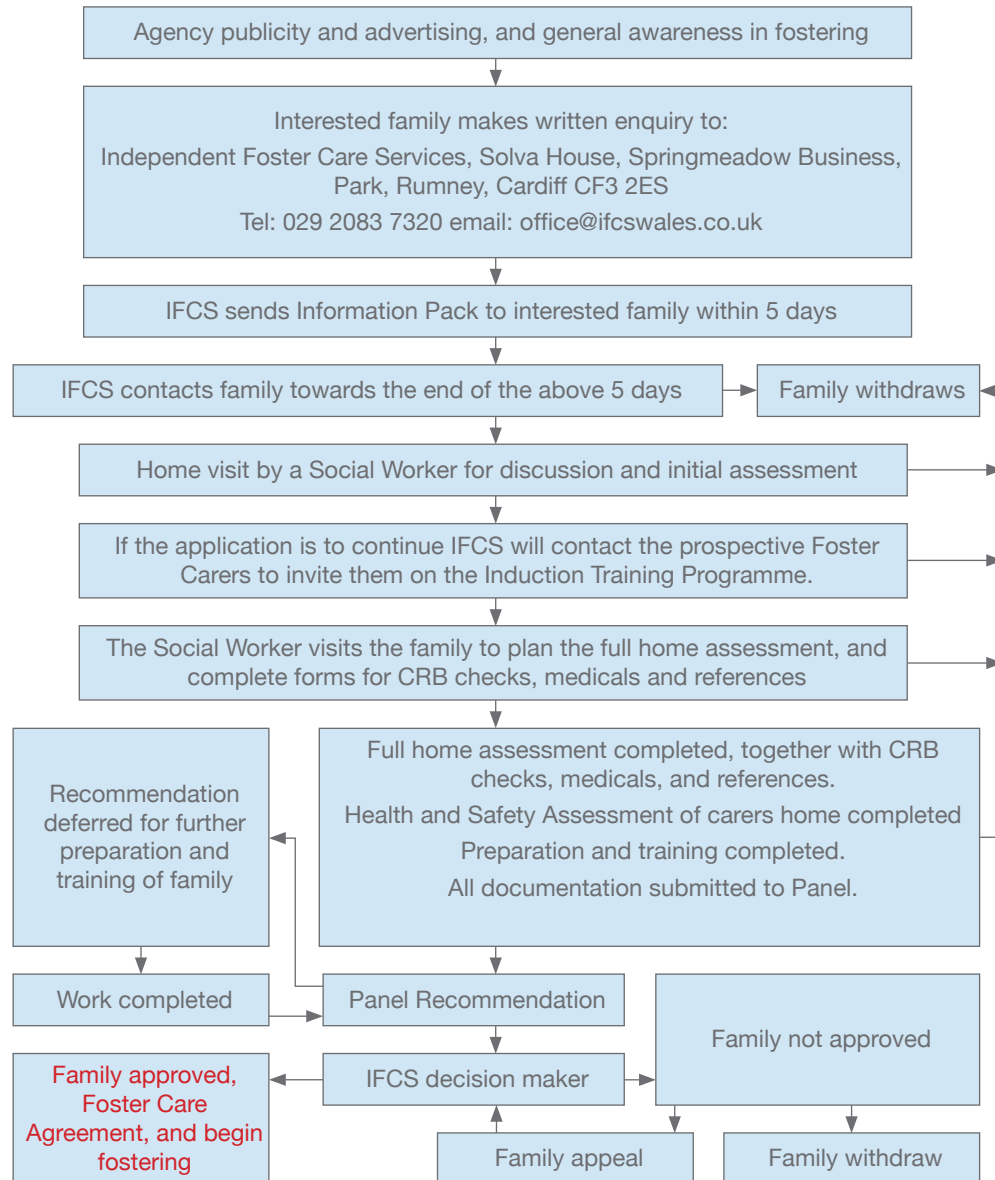
7.6.5 Training Portfolios

7.6.5a Certificates will be provided to those completing each training course, as evidence of development.

7.6.5b Certificates and course attendance records will be filed in the Training Portfolio section on the IFCS Foster Carers Records, which are retained securely in the IFCS offices.

Section 8

The Assessment and Approval Process



Section 9

The Referral and Matching Process

9.1 How to make a Referral to IFCS

- 9.1.1 IFCS have a dedicated Placements Manager and Deputy Placements Manager available during office hours, to fully respond to all placement referrals. Out of office hours, a Duty Worker and Duty Manager are always available. IFCS can therefore respond to placement requests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- 9.1.2 All foster placement vacancies with IFCS will be detailed on the Children’s Commissioning Support Resource system (CCSR). In addition, IFCS fax a paper vacancy bulletin to Local Authority Family Placement teams.
- 9.1.3 Contact details to make a referral in respect of a foster placement vacancy are detailed on the CCSR system. Referrals can be by telephone (029 2083 7320), by fax (029 2083 7321) or by e-mail (office@ifcswales.co.uk), or directly through the CCSR system.
- 9.1.4 All enquiries and referrals from placements are recorded in the IFCS Referral Logbook.
- 9.1.5 In response to placement referrals/requests the Placements Manager and Deputy Placements Manager must complete a Matching Assessment and a separate Risk Assessment, as well as fully consulting identified foster carers and the responsible

9.2 Local Authority Referrals for Planned Foster Placements Including Respite/Short Term Breaks

- 9.2.1 To request a planned foster placement a Local Authority must provide comprehensive information in the form of a referral form or Core or Framework Assessment.
- 9.2.2 The Placements Manager or Deputy Placements Manager will complete a Matching Assessment and Risk Assessment as well as fully consulting identified foster carers and the responsible Local Authorities of any children and young people already in placement. Foster carers will be told all information provided to IFCS by referring Local Authorities, to allow them to make a fully informed decision.
- 9.2.3 Matching is the first and most essential procedure to ensure safe and successful foster care.
- 9.2.4 Once the foster carer and the responsible Local Authorities of any children and young people already in placement have both agreed to accept the referral, the referring Local Authority will be notified and may request the identified foster carers Form F Assessment for further consideration. If the referring Local

Authority wishes to proceed with the planned placement process, the child's Social Worker will be invited to visit the identified Foster Carer with an IFCS Support Worker, to complete a more comprehensive Matching Assessment.



- 9.2.5 If, after the above visit the planned placement is to be proceeded with, arrangements will be made for the child or young person to visit the identified Foster Carer.
- 9.2.6 If the referral is for a respite/short term break foster placement a Placement Planning Meeting must also take place before the placement commences.
- 9.2.7 If the introductory visits (and if required the Placement Planning Meeting), as described above, are successful arrangements will be confirmed for the child or young person to be placed with the identified Foster Carer.
- 9.2.8 Complete LAC documentation must be completed before any child or young person is placed in foster care with IFCS. The IFCS Foster Placement Agreement must be completed by the time the Placement Planning Meeting is held, within one week.

9.3 Local Authority Referrals for Emergency Foster Placements

9.3.1 IFCS recognise that in many cases emergency foster placements are required for children and young people. In these cases it is not practical to complete the entire process as described above.

- 9.3.2 However, IFCS will always require as much information as possible to ensure satisfactory Matching Assessment and Risk Assessments can be completed.
- 9.3.3 IFCS will always require appropriate LAC documentation to be completed prior to any child or young person be placed in foster care. The IFCS Placement Agreement must be completed by the time the Placement Planning Meeting is held, within one week.
- 9.3.4 IFCS will not provide emergency respite/short term foster placements. All such placements must be planned, involving introductions for the child or young person and their parents.

Section 10

Support Services

10.1 Children and Young People
10.1.1 Promoting Education

- 10.1.1.a IFCS is committed to promoting the education of children and young people in foster care, and views this essential area of development as an important measure of the quality of service provided by this agency.
- 10.1.1.b The IFCS Foster Carers and Social Workers are required to record comprehensive details of the progress in education of all children and young people looked after by the agency. The information is used for the compilation of reports for placing Local Authorities, and for working in informed partnership with local qualified professionals and parents to promote education.
- 10.1.1.c Foster carers must attend all Parents Evenings of the schools of the children and young people they are looking after, and record the progress of the child or young person on their Daily Recording Sheet. Foster carers must actively promote the education of the children and young people they look after, and provide a home environment where homework can be appropriately completed and where school attendance, learning and achievement are valued. Foster carers must support the children and young people they look after to attend school trips and activities.

- 10.1.1.d IFCS Foster Carers must display artwork created by children and young people, read bedtime stories, attend performances or sports in which children and young people take part, encourage out of school activities, transport children and young people to clubs or activities to promote their participation, and display all certificates or medals of achievement.
- 10.1.1.e In the first publication of this Statement of Purpose IFCS stated an Education Support Worker would be recruited to promote education specifically. However, this did not prove effective in achieving quality local education services for children and young people. IFCS have changed the strategy for promoting education by recruiting more Social Work staff, to work in partnership with local education professionals like Educational Welfare Officers.
- 10.1.1.f Intensive support from the agency has allowed the local knowledge and expertise of existing education professionals to be fully realised in practice. This partnership has allowed children and young people to benefit quickly from local education services, as local knowledge and expertise has been fully supported by our Social Work staff and when needed finance.
- 10.1.1.g Investing in partnership with local knowledge and expertise was more beneficial for children and young people, than investing in a single specific role within IFCS.

10.1.1.h Support in education for children and young people remains an integral part of the fostering services provided by IFCS, and will incur no extra charges for placing Local Authorities.

10.1.2 Promoting Leisure and Play

10.1.2.a The basic cost of each foster placement provided by IFCS contributes to a Miscellaneous Fund. This fund exists to promote the leisure and play of children and young people with our Foster Carers. The fund can be used to buy musical instruments, sports kits, fund activity trips or anything (that the fund can afford) that will enhance the positive experiences of children and young people in leisure and play.

10.1.2.b The leisure and play opportunities of children and young people should not be restricted or delayed by them being in foster care. The Miscellaneous Fund is designed to make the decisions in respect of exceptional or normally prohibitively expensive leisure and play activities desired by children and young people easier and quicker to make, as the financial element is removed.

10.1.2.c Written permission from a child or young person's parents and the placing Local Authority will be needed before any exceptional leisure or play activity will be funded and facilitated by IFCS.

10.1.2.d To date, for looked after children with our Foster Carers, IFCS has provided finance for outward bound activity holidays, membership of clubs and equipment for sporting activities,

and performing arts and drama activities. IFCS also sponsors sport teams in South Wales, contributes to the cost of children and young people attending holidays, and has purchased special toys and equipment for children with disabilities. IFCS is also the sole sponsor of Radio in Schools, and has their own radio studio for use by children and young people, foster carers and staff.

10.1.3 Promoting Health and Development

10.1.3.a IFCS will request of children and young people, their parents and the relevant Local Authority Social Worker that the child or young person in foster care receive an initial health assessment from a General Practitioner, when first placed in foster care. IFCS, if authorised, will arrange this initial health assessment and will use the BAAF Initial Health Assessment Record (Form IHA) for the purpose. The Initial Health Assessment Record will be filed on the child or young persons file, which will be securely held in the IFCS offices until passed to the relevant Local Authority at the conclusion of the foster placement. The initial health assessment would be completed within 7 days, if authorised.

10.1.3.b IFCS will request of children and young people, their parents and the relevant Local Authority Social Worker that the child or young person in foster care receive checks with a dentist and optician. If the Foster Placement Agreement requires the child or young person to change their dentist and



optician the Foster Carer must ensure this is done within 7 days, and ensure the necessary checks are completed within 14 days, if authorised.

10.1.3.c IFCS have access to a qualified Independent Family Therapist, who can provide therapeutic assessment and counseling of/ for a child or young person's emotional needs. This service must be requested as part of the Foster Placement Agreement and included in the aims and objectives of the foster placement. This service will incur extra charges for the placing Local Authority.

10.1.3.d The qualified Independent Family Therapist can provide consultancy to IFCS staff and Foster Carers on how best to meet the needs of specific children and young people in foster care. This service will

not incur any further charges to placing Local Authorities.

10.1.3.e All prospective Foster Carers with IFCS are required to have a health and safety assessment of their home, and as part of the Induction Training are required to complete courses in First Aid, Food Hygiene, and Safe Care before approval.

10.1.3.f IFCS services are governed by a Procedure Manual, which requires Foster Carers to comply with detailed health and safety procedures. Compliance with these procedures is monitored through the weekly support visits from an IFCS Social Worker, and through 3 monthly Supervision of the Foster Carers.

10.1.3.g All IFCS Foster Carers are required to complete Recording Sheets in respect of the children or young people they are looking after.

Foster Carers are required, as a condition of their Approval, to keep all records and information relating to children and young people in their care, confidential and securely stored.

- 10.1.3.h The Recording Sheets will be collected once a fortnight by the IFCS Social Worker when carrying out their support visits to the Foster Carer's home, and will be securely filed on the child or young person's individual records.
- 10.1.3.i The IFCS Social Worker, during their weekly visit to Foster Carers, will also see the looked after child or young person alone to review the progress of the foster placement. During these visits the IFCS Social Worker will promote the child or young persons understanding of their right to safe care and protection from harm using age appropriate materials, and take them through the different ways they can express their concerns while in foster care.
- 10.1.3.j For every Statutory Review in respect of children and young people in foster care with IFCS, the IFCS Social Worker will collate all these Recording Sheets, and the general daily records, and in consultation with those Foster Carers, and children and young people if appropriate, complete a detailed report on the relevant child or young person's development in foster care. These reports, produced for Statutory Reviews, will cover all aspects of a child or young person's health and development and will contribute to positive care planning.

10.1.4 Child Protection

- 10.1.4.a The primary procedure for ensuring children and young people are protected from harm while being looked after by IFCS will be the formal assessment process of the Foster Carers and ongoing support, supervision, training, and annual review. The need to respect a child or young person's identity will be promoted throughout the formal assessment process, as will respect for a child or young person's individual needs and right to express him or herself appropriately. All forms of corporal punishment are forbidden within IFCS, as are the use of humiliation, ridicule or other forms of verbal abuse against children or young people.
- 10.1.4.b IFCS will strongly promote the positive achievements of children and young people in our care and the recognition of such achievements, as the best method of parenting. The imposition of safe and appropriate boundaries and control must be exercised positively, and must always ensure the dignity of children and young people is respected.
- 10.1.4.c The IFCS Procedure Manual contains detailed child protection procedures, which provide clear instruction to staff and Foster Carers, as well as providing a wider legal and procedural context and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of others. These procedures are derived and based on the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

- 10.1.4.d All prospective Foster Carers must complete a training course in respect of the IFCS Procedure Manual, as part of Induction Training, and a significant part of this course will focus on the child protection procedures.
- 10.1.4.e The IFCS child protection procedures also detail the consequences, in terms of discipline and withdrawal of approval to foster, for staff and Foster Carers who fail to comply with the procedures.

10.1.5 Safeguarding

- 10.1.5.a Promoting welfare, wellbeing and safeguarding must all be part of the same strategy.
- 10.1.5.b All children live within their own world and context, which will contain individual dynamics of risk of harm. Most carers are aware of these, worry about them and seek to put in place strategies to minimise the risks. Where carers are Foster Carers, and the world and context of the child may bring greater levels of risk that may be difficult to understand yet crucial to respond to, minimising this risk to promote wellbeing brings specific challenges.
- 10.1.5.c In safeguarding other people's vulnerable children and young people the start point for Foster Carers and IFCS staff must be the Risk Assessment completed by the Placements Manager or Deputy Placements Manager at the time of the Referral, Matching Assessment and initial placement.
- 10.1.5.d The Risk Assessment must detail the specific needs, behaviours

and contexts which could expose/present vulnerabilities and risks. The Risk Assessment must also detail an Action Plan of strategies the Foster Carer may reasonably put in place to minimise risks.

- 10.1.5.e The initial Risk Assessment and plan must have the support of the responsible Local Authority and, where appropriate, the child or young person themselves.
- 10.1.5.f Helping the child or young person understand professional concerns and securing their cooperation to reduce risk would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the Action Plan.
- 10.1.5.g The Risk Assessment and plan must be reviewed at intervals decided by the child or young person's vulnerability, but it must be reviewed at least at every fortnightly support visit. This judgement should be made with the responsible Local Authority and from supervision between the IFCS Social/Support Worker and their supervising Deputy Service Manager.
- 10.1.5.h Above all, the Risk Assessment review process and resulting Action Plans cannot be seen as punitive or intrusive by the child or young person.
- 10.1.5.i Any indication in the above process of the child or young person suffering significant harm, or being at risk of significant harm, should be immediately be dealt with using the Child Protection Procedures.

10.1.6 Promoting Contact with Family

- 10.1.6.a IFCS recognise that they must be entirely guided and instructed by the referring Local Authority in respect of facilitating a child or young person’s contact with family.
- 10.1.6.b IFCS can offer supervised and assessed contact between children and young people and members of their family, which will be fully recorded, and the written reports passed to the child or young person’s Social Worker.
- 10.1.6.c IFCS are able to assist, support and if necessary supervise contact if required by the Foster Placement Agreement. This service is an integral part of promoting a child or young person’s welfare and will not incur any further costs to the placing Local Authority.
- 10.1.6.d IFCS can offer neutral venues for contact to take place between children and young people and their families, at both our Cardiff and Swansea offices.
- 10.1.6.e The daily records kept by IFCS Foster Carers in respect of the children and young people they are looking after will specifically note details relating to contact. The regular contact between the IFCS Social Worker and Foster Carers and the systematic filing and compiling of daily records in respect of children and young people will provide a database for Local Authority Social Workers to assess the developmental needs of the children and young people they have placed in foster care with IFCS. Contact details will be

an important part of this database.

10.1.7 Promoting Awareness and the Ability to express Concerns and/or Complaints

10.1.7.a Within one week of the first day of the foster placement the IFCS Social Worker will provide the child or young person with an age appropriate Information Pack, and will explain how to use all its contents.

10.1.7.b The information pack and explanation may be provided earlier, possibly on the first day of the foster placement, but the IFCS Social Worker will assess the initial presenting needs of the child or young person, as if they are bewildered and distressed they will not absorb this necessary information effectively. When the child or young person is ready the IFCS Social Worker will present the information pack and fully explain how to use its contents. However, this must happen within one week.

10.1.7.c The Information Pack will include the following sections:

Part 1 Children and Young Peoples Guides

These guides will provide a basic explanation of foster care, IFCS, the child or young person’s right to safe care and what to do if they have been abused, and general useful advice.

Part 2 Summary of Statement of Purpose

The Summary Statement of Purpose is a short and basic explanation of the IFCS Statement of Purpose. The IFCS Social

Worker must provide a more detailed explanation of the Statement of Purpose at the appropriate time for the child or young person.

Part 3 Main Contact Card

The Main Contact Card contains all the necessary information for contacting staff within IFCS, or external agencies.

Part 4 Personal Contact Card

The Personal Contact Card is a credit card sized card containing all the IFCS contact details, including the 24 hour support telephone number, plus the telephone numbers for the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, the NSPCC and Childline. The IFCS Social Worker and Foster Carer must encourage the child or young person to carry this card with them at all times.

Part 5 Complaints Procedures and Forms (including stamped, addressed envelopes).

All the Complaints Procedures are contained within this section, together with IFCS Complaints Forms and stamped addressed envelopes, to IFCS and external agencies. The IFCS Social Worker must explain to the child or young person how to use these procedures, and constantly encourage their use. The Foster Carer must also constantly encourage the child or young person to use these procedures.

Part 6 IFCS website

From the IFCS website children and young people can: access all documentation from their Guide; access the Procedure Manual and this Statement of Purpose; access the Complaints Procedures and forms, complete those forms and send them to IFCS; contact the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, Children’s Commissioner for Wales, NSPCC; access useful links to gain information; play games; or contact anyone within IFCS. The IFCS Social Worker must explain all these services to the child or young person.

10.1.7.d The Information Pack will also contain a diary, lifebook and a camera for the child or young person.

10.1.7.e The aim of these services is to allow children and young people of different abilities to access essential information, and express themselves as easily as possible, in a variety of different ways. The IFCS Social Worker and Foster Carer have a duty to promote the use of these services by the child or young person.

10.1.7.f The internet and email facilities available through these services are restricted to those provided by IFCS. They will allow children and young people in foster care to express themselves to appropriate professionals and agencies only, instantly and at the time of their choosing.



10.2 Foster Carers

10.2.1 Social Work Support

10.2.1.a The IFCS Social Worker will provide the main support to Foster Carers, and be their main point of contact. The contact telephone number for Social Work support is 02920 837320.

10.2.1.b Foster Carers will receive frequent telephone contact from their Social Worker. The purpose of this contact is to promote partnership in the provision of quality care for children and young people, and for IFCS to take the initiative to contact Foster Carers to enquire about any support that may be needed in advance, rather than allowing Foster Carers to “chase” professionals for support at a time of need or crisis.

10.2.1.c Foster Carers will receive at least one home visit every fortnight from their Social Worker. The purpose of this visit is to provide practical and emotional support to the Foster Carers and children and young people, and provide an ongoing assessment (including a review of the Risk Assessment) of the progress of the care provided and the development of the children and young people in placement. The fortnightly home visits by the Social Worker to Foster Carers are a minimum and may increase in frequency depending on the needs of the Foster Carer or children and young people in placement at any one time.

10.2.1.d The Social Worker, during their home visit to the Foster Carers, will see each child or young person in foster care individually and in

private, to allow the child or young person to express their personal views and feelings about the progress of the foster placement.

10.2.1.e Foster Carers can request additional home visits at any time by telephoning 02920 837320. The Social Worker or out of hours Duty Social Worker do not have authority to refuse a home visit requested by a Foster Carer.

10.2.1.f The Social Worker or out of hours Duty Social Worker will make a written record of every contact and visit to Foster Carers.

10.2.1.g Written records of all contacts and visits to Foster Carers by the Social Worker will be compiled every three months by the Social Worker into a report, which will inform formal three monthly Supervision. These reports, and the resulting minutes of formal Supervision, will be further compiled, by the Social Worker, into an annual summary to inform the Annual Review of the Foster Carer. All these reports and minutes will be filed on the Foster Carers records.

10.2.1.h Foster Carers who are the subject of serious complaints and/or child protection investigations, can be supported by an independent support worker. IFCS recognises that support for Foster Carers is vital during these processes, and as an agency will fully cooperate with external investigations and facilitate positive and independent support for the Carers affected.

10.2.2 Out of Hours Support

10.2.2.a The office hours of IFCS are weekdays 9.00am to 17.00pm. During these hours IFCS can be contacted by telephone (02920 837320), by fax (02920 837321), or on any of the email addresses below:

General Office
office@ifcswales.co.uk

Business Manager
businessmanager@ifcswales.co.uk

Service Manager
servicemanager@ifcswales.co.uk

10.2.2.b Out of office hours support is provided between 17.00pm and 9.00am every weekday, and throughout every weekend from 17.00pm on Friday to 9.00am Monday. In addition, out of office hours support is provided throughout all Bank Holiday periods.

10.2.2.c A qualified and experienced Duty Social Worker will always be available for Foster Carers and children and young people to contact at any time during the out of office hours periods. The Duty Social Worker will be supported by an on-call Duty Manager.

10.2.2.d The telephone number to contact the out of office hours Duty Social Worker is 02920 837320 – the same number as used during office hours.

10.2.2.e Reasons for Foster Carers contacting the out of hours Duty Social Worker can include: advice and guidance; reassurance; emotional or practical support; to request a home visit; to request

emergency respite care; to request assistance with transport; to notify IFCS of information relating to a child protection concern or significant event involving a child or young person like absconding, arrest, serious accident or illness, or emergency medical treatment.

10.2.2.f The out of hours Duty Social Worker does not have the authority to refuse to visit a Foster Carer, or provide necessary transport, when requested to do so by a Foster Carer.

10.2.3 Foster Carer’s Support Group Meetings

10.2.3.a Foster Carer’s Support Group Meetings will be held every three months.

10.2.3.b All Foster Carers will be expected to attend these support group meetings.

10.2.3.c To keep Support Groups effective and fit for purpose each Social Worker will arrange and facilitate a group of the Foster Carers they support on their caseload. This keeps groups small, safe, positive and able to provide a better experience for all.

10.2.3.d Social Workers will consult with Foster Carers on issues they would wish to have discussed or facilitated in their part of the agenda.

10.2.3.e The Service Manager, Deputies and Social/Support Workers will attend support group meetings if requested to do so, as will a member of the admin team who will act as minute taker.

10.2.3.f The agenda items will have been set by Foster Carers themselves over the preceding month, in consultation with the facilitating Social Worker.

10.2.3.g Foster Carers will have access to monies from the Training Budget to invite speakers to their Support Group Meetings if they choose.

10.2.3.h Foster Carers can claim travelling expenses of 40 pence per mile, or reimbursement of bus or train tickets, to attend Support Group Meetings.

10.2.3.i The admin team has responsibility for taking the minutes of the support group meeting, and recording all recommendations and agreed actions in detail, and circulating the minutes to all Foster Carers and IFCS staff.

10.2.4 Respite Care

10.2.4.a Respite care cannot be used as a holiday from caring for children and young people. Respite care provided internally by IFCS is for the purposes of maintaining placement stability, and for rest and recuperation. Children and young people have a right to a high standard of stable quality care, and respite care is provided to assist Foster Carers to maintain this standard.

10.2.4.b Independent Foster Care Services will provide paid respite care to Foster Carer/s as needed for the benefit of looked after children and young person and their foster families. The purpose of respite is placement stability and to promote individual wellbeing.



10.2.4.c IFCS have a planned respite strategy and can always provide emergency respite care when necessary, as a last resort.

10.2.4.d Permission from the responsible Local Authority for the child/young person requiring respite care must be secured before any respite placement can be arranged. Responsible Local Authority have complete authority for their children and young people.

10.2.5 Financial Support

10.2.5.a Retainer payments are paid to Foster Carers who have undertaken the full home assessment, induction training and necessary checks, and have received a positive recommendation from the IFCS Foster Panel, which has been

accepted and confirmed by the Business Manager. Retainer payments are not paid to Foster Carers who are only approved to provide respite care, or who choose to limit their approval to a specific age band.

10.2.5.b Retainer payments will commence following Foster Carers receiving and signing their Foster Care Agreement.

10.2.5.c Retainer payments will be paid to Foster Carers when they have no children or young people placed with them, in recognition of the fact that they must make themselves available 24 hours a day to consider referrals for placements.

- 10.2.5.d Retainer payments to Foster Carers stop when they begin to look after a child or young person, and Foster Carers are then paid the appropriate weekly allowance.
- 10.2.5.e Retainer payments are paid to Foster Carers through BACS.
- 10.2.5.f Retainer payments are paid weekly for individual foster homes.
- 10.2.5.g Weekly allowances are paid when Foster Carers are looking after children and young people.
- 10.2.5.h Weekly allowances are paid to Foster Carers to finance all aspects of a child or young person's basic care needs, including: food; clothes; general leisure and play costs; celebratory presents; holiday costs; pocket money; and school uniform and stationary costs. Weekly allowances also contribute to utility costs, furnishings, bedding, appropriate car insurance and maintenance, and mortgage or rent costs.
- 10.2.5.i Weekly allowances do not contribute to ongoing training costs; necessary health and safety equipment like Smoke Alarms, safety gates, secure medicine cabinets, and First Aid Boxes; significant costs to promote non-general leisure and play activities; necessary computer equipment and internet connection costs; and legal liability insurance. All these costs will be met by IFCS. Weekly allowances are paid to Foster Carers every Monday.

- 10.2.5.k Weekly allowances are paid to Foster Carers through BACS.

10.2.6 Procedure Manual

- 10.2.6.a The IFCS Procedure Manual details clear guidance and instructions for Foster Carers, children and young people and staff, on all aspects of foster care and the services offered by this agency.
- 10.2.6.b Copies of the Procedure Manual will be provided to all Foster Carers, and compliance with its requirements will be an integral component of all Foster Care Agreements.

10.3 Staff Support

10.3.1 Supervision

- 10.3.1.a Formal, recorded and confidential supervision will be carried out with all staff every three weeks.
- 10.3.1.b Supervision will be recorded on the IFCS Staff Supervision Record. These records will be written by the Supervisor during Supervision, and will include an action plan detailing actions to be taken by specified persons and in what timescale.
- 10.3.1.c The completed IFCS Staff Supervision Record must be signed by both the Supervisor and Supervisee, and will be filed on the Supervisee's Personnel file.
- 10.3.1.d IFCS staff will have access to their supervision records at all times, as will their Supervisors. IFCS staff will not have access to other staff member's supervision records, unless they are accessing those records in a management role.

- 10.3.1.e Supervision records may be accessed by Local Authorities conducting child protection investigations, and external statutory organisations like the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales when inspecting IFCS.

- 10.3.1.f All IFCS staff must attend supervision with their line manager every three weeks. The Supervisor and the Supervisee have responsibilities for ensuring Supervision takes place every three weeks, and is appropriately recorded.

- 10.3.1.g The purposes of Supervision are: personal and professional support for the Supervisee; advice, guidance and instruction on the Supervisee's work; monitoring of the Supervisee's performance; and planning of professional development and training.

- 10.3.1.h The Business Manager will formally supervise the Service Manager. The Service Manager will supervise the Deputy Service Managers, Placement and Deputy Placement Managers, Recruitment and Development Manager and Office Manager. The Deputy Service Managers will supervise all support staff, and the Office Manager will supervise all Admin Officers, including the Deputy Office Manager.

- 10.3.1.i The Service Manager and other members of the management team are expected to provide informal supervision to IFCS staff when requested – either within or outside office hours. IFCS staff requesting advice and guidance

through informal supervision must record their concern or question, and the response given, on the daily recording sheet on the appropriate records (it will be either a Foster Carer's records or child or young person's records).

10.3.2 Annual Appraisal

- 10.3.2.a The first Appraisal of staff will take place after completion of their 6 months probation period, following employment with IFCS. This first Appraisal will follow the same format as Annual Appraisals, and will confirm or otherwise continued employment with IFCS.

- 10.3.2.b All IFCS staff will be subject to Annual Appraisals, which will review the individual staff members' progress, and strengths and weaknesses throughout the year. The Annual Appraisal will be formal, confidential and recorded, and will result in an agreed action plan identifying specific aims and objectives to be focused on during supervision sessions in the next year.

- 10.3.2.c Foster Carers and children and young people will be encouraged to contribute to the Appraisal of individual IFCS staff in writing. However, the records and action plan made as a result of Appraisal will be kept confidential on Personnel Files.

- 10.3.2.d All Annual Appraisals will be conducted and recorded by the Service Manager. Annual Appraisals will be recorded on the IFCS Staff Annual Appraisal Report, and filed on the appropriate staff member's Personnel File.



10.3.2.e Access procedures in respect of IFCS Annual Appraisal Reports are the same as those detailed above in respect of IFCS Staff Supervision Records.

10.3.3 Team Meetings

10.3.3.a Team Meetings, for all IFCS staff, will be every three weeks.

10.3.3.b The chairperson of all Team Meetings will be the Service Manager, and the minutes will be taken by an Admin Officer.

10.3.3.c There will be four set agenda items for Team Meetings: Placement Review; Diary for the following Week; News and Information (from BAAF, CRB, Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales or Children's Commissioner for Wales); health and safety; and External Training Courses. Other agenda items are at the discretion of the Service Manager.

10.3.3.d An Admin Officer has responsibility for typing and distributing Team Meeting minutes.

10.3.4 Training

10.3.4.a IFCS is responsible for financing training, and the Business Manager is responsible for arranging cover to allow the Staff to attend lectures, study or placement.

10.3.4.b IFCS staff must attend the same induction and core training courses as Foster Carers.

10.3.4.c IFCS staff must also attend a staff Core Training Programme, which will include courses on: Training the Trainers; Child Protection (update and refresher training); Communicating Effectively with Children; Child Development; Managing Challenging Behaviour; and Attachment, Bereavement and Loss.

10.3.4.d Once all the induction and core training courses have been completed IFCS staff will have access to a maximum of 6 external courses or conferences per year, each of no more than 3 days duration, or will be allowed a maximum of 18 days paid study leave per year to attend an appropriate and relevant accredited course.

10.3.4.e All IFCS staff have individual training programmes planned for them through consultation with the IFCS training consultant, and through supervision and appraisal with their Line Managers.

10.3.4.f IFCS staff will be entitled to 40 pence per mile or reimbursement of bus or train tickets to attend training, in addition to their full salary entitlement.

10.3.4.g All training courses and certificates will be recorded and filed on staff Personnel Files.

10.3.5 Procedure Manual

10.3.5.a The IFCS Procedure Manual details clear guidance and instructions for Foster Carers, children and young people and staff, on all aspects of foster care and the services offered by this agency.

10.3.5.b Copies of the Procedure Manual will be provided to all staff, and compliance with its requirements will be an integral component of all contracts of employment.

Section 11
Managing the Quality and Effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure

11.1 The Complaints Procedure

- 11.1.1 To achieve a successful and well used Complaints Procedure, IFCS will promote ease of communication, complaints being managed as a positive learning experience, and resolved as quickly, informally and as locally as possible, to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- 11.1.2 IFCS welcome complaints by all, especially children and young people. However, these procedures can and should be used by parents, professionals and the public also.
- 11.1.3 Complaints and concerns are vital to ensure quality of service and to aid development, and will improve care for children and young people in the future.
- 11.1.4 Complaints and concerns are therefore, vital, and we welcome them and urge you to express them as a positive and constructive act.
- 11.1.5 Complaints and/or concerns can be expressed in a number of different easy ways. Complainants do not just have to use these procedures from IFCS, and are free to talk to anyone – Social Services, or Advocacy, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales or the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

- 11.1.6 Complaints are welcome from children and young people, their parents, professionals, Foster Carers and members of the public.
- 11.1.7 There are five ways to make a complaint to IFCS:
 By phone on 02920 837320 at any time. This is a 24 hour number.
 By fax to 02920 837321.
 By post Complaints Forms and stamped and addressed envelopes, which IFCS provide to Foster Carers and children and young people.
 By email direct from our website at www.ifcswales.co.uk/making_complaints.html. Complaints Forms can also be printed from this section of our website, which also contains information and links to the Children’s Commissioner and Care and Social Services Inspectorate.
- 11.1.8 If you are a young person or Foster Carer you can text the word “complaint” and your name to 07717311703, and someone from IFCS will contact you as soon as possible.
- 11.1.9 Children and young people will be given an information pack containing all the necessary details of how to make a complaint, together with a full explanation of how to use this information, within one week of being placed in foster care.
- 11.1.10 The information pack and explanation may be provided earlier, possibly on the first day of the foster placement, but the IFCS Support Worker will assess

the initial presenting needs of the child or young person, as if they are bewildered and distressed they will not absorb this necessary information effectively. When the child or young person is ready the IFCS Support Worker will present the information pack and fully explain how to use its contents. However, this must happen within one week.

- 11.1.11 Social Workers from placing Local Authorities will be provided with a pack of the IFCS Complaints Procedures, including Complaints Forms and stamped and addressed envelopes to IFCS at the time a child or young person arriving in placement. An additional pack will be provided to the Local Authority Social Workers to pass to the child or young person’s parents.
- 11.1.12 All complaints by children and young people placed with IFCS Foster Carers will first be referred to the responsible Local Authority Social Worker, who will decide if they wish to interview the respective child or young person making the complaint or are content for IFCS to do so. Where the responsible Local Authority Social Worker decides to interview the child or young person themselves, the investigation and resolution of the complaint will be managed jointly. However, the outcome (in respect of any possible action against IFCS Foster Carers and/or staff) will be wholly decided by IFCS.
- 11.1.13 With respect to the paragraph above, there are 3 stages to the IFCS complaints procedure.

- Stage 1:** The first stage involves the child or young person, Foster Carer, parents, or others involved in the foster care process, expressing their concerns informally to the Foster Carer’s identified IFCS Social/Support Worker. The IFCS Social/Support Worker will then attempt to address the concerns informally with all parties, and seek to achieve a local resolution. If any party is not satisfied with the outcome at this stage the original concern will be referred to the second stage of the procedure.
 Stage one of the Complaints Procedure must be completed within ten working days. Beyond this period the original concern could be referred to stage two.
 Complaints against the IFCS Social/Support Worker or any member of the Admin team or against any professional contracted to IFCS will begin at stage two of the Complaints Procedure.
- Stage 2:** The second stage of the Complaints Procedure involves the original concern being reported to the Service Manager of IFCS by the foster family’s IFCS Social/Support Worker, and the Service Manager formally investigating the original concern.
 The outcome of this process will be arrived at through the Service Manager individually interviewing all parties, and a formal planning meeting being convened and chaired by the Service Manager to attempt to achieve a positive outcome. If no positive outcome could be achieved at this stage



would be free to refer the original concern to an external agency like the Children’s Commissioner for Wales or the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

Stage three of the Complaints Procedure must be completed within ten working days. Beyond this period the original concern could be referred externally to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales or the Children’s Commissioner for Wales.

11.1.8 Formal Complaints against the Business Manager:

- 11.1.9 All formal complaints against the Business Manager will be dealt with by the chair of the IFCS Foster Panel, who will fully investigate the details of the complaint without reference to the Business Manager.
- 11.1.10 The Chair of the Panel will then compile a brief report of their investigation and decision in respect of the complaint and send a copy of this report to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.
- 11.1.11 The Business Manager for IFCS welcomes complaints against him being fully investigated independently and in confidence and fully supports all details and outcomes of these, being sent to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales. The Business Manager believes that complaints and their investigation are essential to the development of safe services for children and young people and in learning

the Service Manager will refer the original concern to the third stage of the complaints procedure. Complaints against the Service Manager will begin at Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

Stage two of the Complaints Procedure must be completed within ten working days of the original concern being referred from stage one. Beyond this period the original concern could be referred to stage three.

Stage 3: The third stage of the procedure requires the original concern to be referred to the IFCS Business Manager who will review all available information, compile a report in respect of this information and make a decision on the outcome.

If the third stage of the Complaints Procedure was not satisfactory to the original person or persons making the complaint then they

lessons for maintaining and developing high quality services.

11.2 Whistle Blowing Procedures

- 11.2.1 All staff within IFCS, whether employed full time, part time, or on a sessional or consultancy basis, and Foster Carers, are subject to, and protected by, the IFCS Whistle Blowing Procedures. However, it will be expected that all possible attempts will have been made to resolve the concerns through the IFCS Complaints Procedures before using these Whistle Blowing Procedures.
- 11.2.2 If IFCS staff or Foster Carers have concerns, of whatever nature, that they independently feel have not, or cannot, be addressed appropriately within the agency, they are free to take their concerns to an appropriate external statutory agency.
- 11.2.3 Such statutory agencies may be the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Local Authorities, the NSPCC, a Children’s Advocacy Unit, or the Police.
- 11.2.4 IFCS staff and Foster Carers are entirely free to report concerns in the manner described in the three paragraphs above, and will not be subject to disciplinary action or any action that affects their employment or Foster Care Agreements.
- 11.2.5 IFCS staff and Foster Carers may report their concerns to the media, in certain circumstances.
- 11.2.6 IFCS staff and Foster Carers must never pass information

to the media that may lead to the identification of a child or young person in foster care, or any member of a Foster Carers family. Passing confidential and/ or personal information regarding children or young people in foster care, or any members of a Foster Carers family, to the media, will result in instant dismissal, or termination of the Foster Care Agreement.

- 11.2.7 IFCS encourages all their staff and Foster Carers to report their concerns appropriately and responsibly, and completely supports the principle that at times staff and Foster Cares will have concerns that cannot be addressed within the agency. Responsible whistle blowing is a positive activity that will ultimately promote the welfare and protection of children and young people in foster care, and must be supported and promoted.
- 11.2.8 Concerns reported under these procedures will not be recorded on the individual staff members Personnel Files or the Foster Carers Files, but will be recorded by the Chair of the IFCS Foster Panel on the IFCS Register of Concerns made under Whistle Blowing Procedures. Having recorded the concerns and outcomes the Chair of the IFCS Foster Panel will address any lessons to be learned during Supervision with the Business Manager.

11.3 Complainants Rights

11.3.1 IFCS emphasis that complainants are free to contact the appropriate Local Authority, Children's Commissioner and/or Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales to express their concerns at any time. Use of the IFCS Complaints Procedure does not prevent use of any other appropriate agency.

11.4 Reviewing the Complaints Procedure

11.4.1 The Business Manager is responsible for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure, and completing a written report in respect of this review. To undertake this task the Business Manager must file copies of all complaints and allegations, and concerns expressed through the Whistle Blowing Procedures, on the Complaints Procedure Review File, to collate the information below.

11.4.2 The report must detail the number of complaints and concerns made by staff, Foster Carers, children and young people, parents, and professionals from external agencies, in total and against the separate defined categories (stage 1, 2, and 3 of the Complaints Procedure; complaints against the Business Manager; complaints made using the Whistle-Blowing Procedures; allegations and general concerns).

11.4.3 The report must also detail the number of satisfactory and unsatisfactory outcomes (as defined by the persons making

the original complaints and/or concerns), in total and by the separate defined categories highlighted above.

11.4.4 The report must also review the effectiveness of the communication systems within IFCS, by discussion at staff Team Meetings, discussion at Foster Carer's Support Group Meetings, and consultation with children and young people.

11.4.5 The report must make recommendations on any improvements to the Complaints Procedures and communication systems.

11.4.6 The report must be submitted to the IFCS Foster Panel conducting the Annual Service Review, and to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

Section 12**Confidentiality and Access to Records**

12.1 IFCS has detailed and specific procedures in respect of recording, confidentiality and access to records, which are contained in the IFCS Procedure Manual.

12.2 Generally, children and young people, and Foster Carers, will have access to all records in respect of them written by IFCS staff. External agencies and /or persons who have provided written reports or records to IFCS will have authority over the disclosure of their material. IFCS staff will have access to all records on their Personnel Files at any time.

12.3 IFCS Foster Carers and staff have a duty, which is specifically stated in their Foster Care Agreements and Contracts of Employment, to immediately report all information which indicates a child or young person has suffered significant harm or is at risk of suffering such harm to the appropriate Police and Local Authority. Failure to comply with this duty will result in staff being made subject to the IFCS Disciplinary Procedures and Foster Carers having their approval status reviewed.

12.4 Foster Carers are required, as a condition of their Approval, to keep all records and information relating to children and young people in their care, confidential and securely stored.

12.5 All information kept by IFCS will be made available when requested to the Police and Local Authorities carrying out child protection investigations, and to the Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales conducting inspections of IFCS.



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