

September 2017



Statement of Purpose



Independent
Foster Care
Services

This Statement of Purpose is provided to and made available to employees, carers, local authorities, children and young people in placement and to the general public via the IFCS website www.ifcswales.co.uk or in hard copy when requested.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and agreed annually, by the Senior Management Team.



Independent
Foster Care
Services



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Introduction

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.

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.

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.

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.



Status and Constitution

IFCS is an independent fostering agency and a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company No. 4645203).

The Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales registered us as a fostering agency on the 16th August 2004. On 1st September 2015 IFCS joined the National Foster Agency group. Being part of a larger organisation ensures that the agency is both financially secure and able to access the expertise that exists within the larger organisation, whilst still retaining a local presence and identity for which IFCS is well known.

IFCS is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service and Gail Tobin is the lead signatory.

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.



Management and Staff Roles

Structure

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.

Registered Manager

The current Registered Manager is Gail Tobin however Louise Atkins was appointed to the post of Acting Registered Manager in January 2017. Once this has been formally ratified by CSSIW Gail Tobin will step down and assume the post of Practice Manager. Louise Atkins is the current Line Manager of all of the management team and provides supervision to them.

Deputy Service Managers

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. 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. The Deputy Service Managers are supervised by the Service Manager.

Finance and Personnel Manager

The Finance Manager records all company income and expenditure, and ensures Foster Carers and staff are paid correctly and promptly. The Finance Manager liaises with the Company Accountants to ensure quarterly Management Information Reports and Annual Company Accountants are produced accurately and promptly. The Finance Manager records all information in respect of staff, ensures personnel files are kept up to date, and ensures checks and Care Council Registrations are completed as

required. The Finance Manager is supervised by the Service Manager.

Office Manager

The Office Manager formally supervises all members of the Administration Team, manages and coordinates the development of all data management systems, ensures the company benefits from efficient administration and reception services, and liaises with IT and office equipment and supplies contractors to ensure all IFCS offices are properly equipped and supplied. The Office Manager also has responsibility for ensuring accuracy and integrity of recorded data, and working with the Service Manager to produce required Management Information. The Office Manager also has responsibility for covering the financial responsibilities of the Finance Manager when required. The Officer Manager is formally supervised by the Service Manager.

Placement Manager and Placement Officer

The placement manager is a senior member of the placements team and is a qualified social worker. They provide supervision advice and guidance and instruction to the placement team. the placement officers is also a qualified social worker.

Social Workers

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. Social Workers will be supervised by the Deputy Service Managers.

Support Workers

The Family Support Workers for IFCS have specific roles for supporting the placements of children and young people, these roles may include facilitating contact with parents and working directly with children and young people. Support Workers will be supervised by the Deputy Service Managers.

Administration Officers

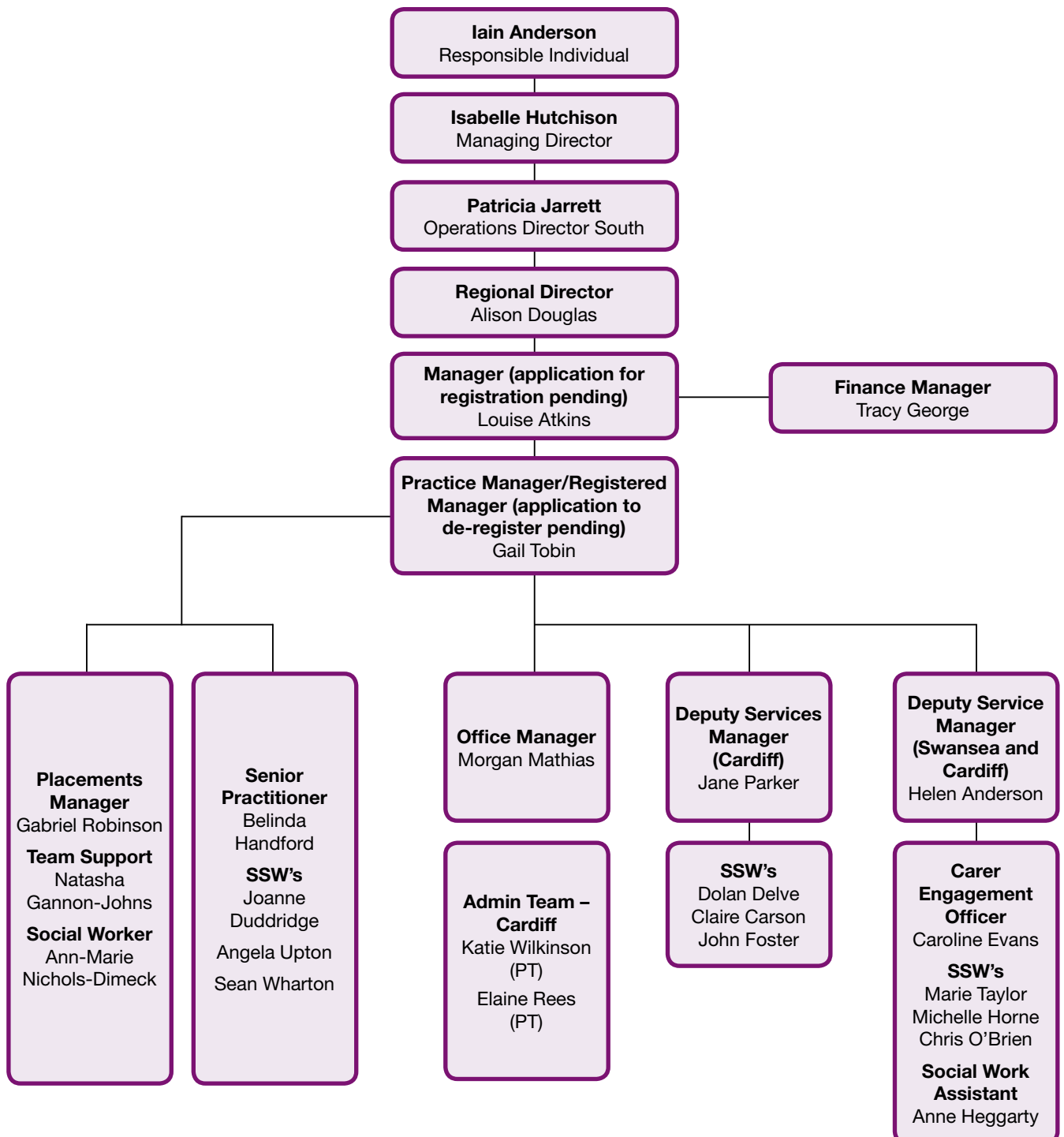
The Administration Officers have general responsibility for typing if requested by the Management Team, filing, scanning, Preparation for Annual Reviews and reception duties. Administration Officers also arrange and record training, carry out specific administration duties for the Placement Team, record minutes of meetings, and provide a positive, efficient and welcoming first point of contact. All Administration Officers are supervised by the Office Manager.

Consultants

Consultants engaged by IFCS are not employees, but are contracted to carry out specific work paid for on an invoice basis. 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.



IFCS Company Structure





Services Provided

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.

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.

IFCS deliver high quality services for children and young people and their Foster Carers, under the All Wales Framework.

IFCS Services include everything required by partner Local Authorities through contractual obligations. However, IFCS provide additional and strengthened services 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.
- Emergency respite care.
- Family contact services, including supervision.
- High quality and comprehensive data

recording, management and evaluation systems, available 24 hours, to inform support services, and measure and promote good outcomes for children and young people.

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.



Aims and Objectives

Independent Foster Care Services (IFCS) is committed to providing high quality foster family care for children and young people placed.

In partnership with placing Local Authorities IFCS will seek to offer a holistic foster care service which can 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.

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; 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.

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 visits from IFCS staff, as well as regular support group meetings, ongoing training 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.

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.

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 relevant professionals.

IFCS will always provide 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 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.

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.

IFCS promote positive leisure and play activities for all children and young people placed in foster care with us. A component of the weekly fostering allowance should be set aside and Foster Carer's should ensure they promote this essential area of development.

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.

IFCS is also committed to training and development, and welcomes Social Work students. 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.

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.



Foster Carers

Eligibility Criteria

IFCS have the following eligibility criteria for prospective Foster Carers:

All prospective Foster Carers will be between the ages of 25 and 65 years. 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.

Prospective Foster Carers must accept regular telephone contact, and regular visits, Annual Reviews and ongoing training, as mandatory requirements.

Prospective Foster Carers, and all adults in their home, must consent to enhanced checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service, during the assessment and thereafter every three years.

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 Disclosure and Barring Service. In addition prospective Foster Carers must complete all Induction Training Courses, before being considered for approval as Foster Carers.

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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Recruitment

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.

Having received an expression of interest or an Initial Application Form, IFCS will send out the booklet "An Introduction to Foster Care with IFCS" to the enquirer. An IFCS Social Worker will then contact and make an appointment to visit usually within ten 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.

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 Coram BAAF Form F Assessment will be undertaken.

Independent Foster Care Services welcomes all applications from couples and single carers, from all sections of society. Recruitment of foster carers must follow the planned growth of IFCS detailed in the Business Plan.

Assessment and Preparation Process

IFCS Social Workers will usually complete fostering assessments. However, assessments may be completed by external assessors.

The structure of the assessments will follow the Coram BAAF Form F1, Parts 1 to 5.

IFCS is a registered member of Coram BAAF, and has access to their research and guidance publications on assessment.

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 Disclosure and Barring Service, with which IFCS is registered and the Service 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.

Prospective Foster Carers will be required to have medical checks as part of the assessment process. Medical checks on prospective Foster Carers will be recorded on the Coram 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 comment.

Prospective Foster Carers must provide two referees, who must be interviewed by the Social Worker as part of the assessment process. Prospective Foster Carers must submit all documentation relating to their vehicle for inspection by the Social Worker, as part of the assessment process.

Prospective Foster Carers must allow an initial general health and safety inspection of their home. This will include sightings of the most recent gas and electrical safety certificates. All of these 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.

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.

During the home assessment process prospective Foster Carers will be required to attend Induction Training. All Foster Carers will be required to complete "Skills to Foster" and other mandatory training including First Aid, Child Protection, Safe Care, Anti Discriminatory Practice in Foster Care, Record Keeping and Child Development. The Social Workers may attend this training and comment on the progress of prospective Foster Carers.

Completed Form F assessments will be filed on the relevant prospective Foster Carers records. The Social Worker will show and discuss completed assessments 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, completed Form F's shared with Local Authorities as part of matching considerations.

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

Approval

All prospective Foster Carers to be the subject of a full assessment, and this assessment has to be considered by the Foster Panel. There cannot be consideration to 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.

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

If prospective Foster Carer's application and assessment is not approved then they will be written to formally, recording in writing the decisions, and enclosing the recommendations of the Foster Panel in the letter. The prospective Foster Carers will be informed in the letter that they have 28 days to make further written representations to support any reconsideration of their assessment.

If a prospective Foster Carer does not agree with the qualifying determination of the responsible individual, they can appeal directly to the Independent Review Mechanism Cymru, 7 Cleeve

House, Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff, CF14 5GP, within 28 days. More information about this independent service can be found at www.irmcymru.org.uk.

Annual Reviews

Foster Carers will receive formal Annual Reviews, which will be completed by a senior qualified Social worker. When an Annual Review is returned to Panel this will be chaired by the named Panel Chair and recorded. The Reviewing Officer will attend Panel and Carers may attend if they wish to. All Annual Reviews returning to Panel are recorded. Annual Reviews will be informed by a summary report, completed by the Supporting Social Worker.

Annual Reviews will also be informed by: reports by the Foster Carers and children and young people; Local Authorities; Health and Safety Assessments; any required checks; motor vehicle documents; and any other necessary reports and/or assessments.

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.

The Social Worker/Reviewing Officer will make a written record of the Annual Review and Inspection carried out. There will be a written report and include any action points and recommendations. The first annual review report will always 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. The recommendations of the IFCS Foster Panel will be considered by the Registered Service

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.

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 Registered Service Manager.

Any Foster Carer who is unhappy with the qualifying determinations following their Review can appeal directly to the Independent Review Mechanism Cymru, 7 Cleeve House, Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff, CF14 5GP, within 28 days. Further information about this independent service can be found at www.irmcymru.org.uk.

General Training Principles

Training is necessary to provide and enhance the skills Foster Carer's need to provide high quality care for vulnerable children and young people. Training must be useful, relevant and based on Foster Carer's assessed needs.

Training will be delivered in a safe, non-threatening and non-discriminatory manner, and will be wholly child centered. Training will be delivered at times taking into account the child care commitments of Foster Carers. When these commitments are so significant that Foster Carers attendance at training is impeded IFCS will provide child care support. IFCS staff and Foster Carers will attend training together to promote partnership and joint understanding of good practice.

All prospective Foster Carers are required to 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.

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.

Induction Training Courses

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

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.

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.

Further Training Courses

All Approved Foster Carers with IFCS must attend further training courses as identified through support visits and Annual Reviews, Carers will be encouraged to complete the QCF Diploma in Health and Social Care Level 3.

IFCS has a Training Officer to plan all courses, and assist and mentor Foster Carers to achieve the QCF qualification.

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.

Evaluation

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

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

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

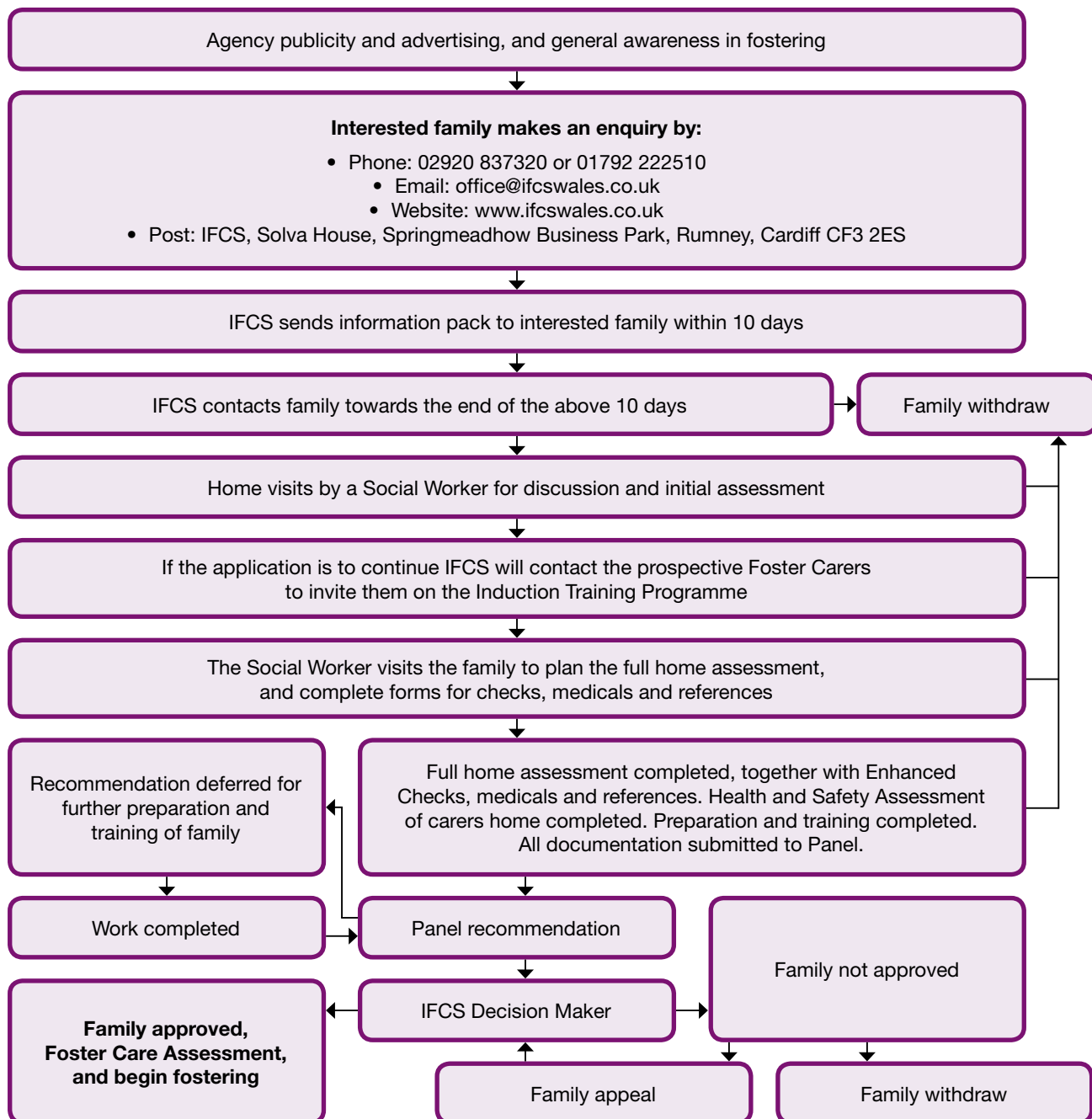
Training Portfolios

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

Certificates and course attendance records will be filed in the Training Portfolio section on the IFCS Foster Carers Records.



Assessment and Approval Process





The Referral and Matching Process

How to make a Referral to IFCS

IFCS have a dedicated Placement Team 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.

All foster placement vacancies with IFCS will be detailed on the Children's Commissioning Support Resource system (CCSR).

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.

All enquiries and referrals from placements are recorded in the IFCS Referral Logbook.

In response to placement referrals/requests the IFCS Placements Team will complete all paperwork required by Local Authorities, as well as internal Matching and Risk Assessments. Foster Carers will be fully consulted and provided with all information shared with them, allowing them to make an informed decision. Responsible Local Authorities of any and all children and young people already in placement with the identified Foster Carers will also be consulted, and their formal permission sought and secured.

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

To request a foster placement a Local Authority must provide comprehensive information in the form of a referral form.

The IFCS Placement Team will complete all paperwork required by the referring Local Authority and the internal Matching and Risk Assessments 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.

Matching is the first and most essential procedure to ensure safe and successful foster care.

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 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.

If, after the above visit the placement is to be proceeded with, arrangements will be made for the child or young person to visit the identified Foster Carer.

If the referral is for a respite/short term break foster placement a Placement Planning Meeting should take place before the placement commences.

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.

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.



Support Services – Children and Young People

Promoting Education

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.

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.

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.

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.

IFCS will always go that extra mile to promote education in close partnership with Local Authorities. This allows children and young people to benefit from quickly arranged continuous education, without interruption.

Promoting Leisure and Play

There is an expectation that Foster carers promote leisure and play to enhance positive experiences for children and young people.

Promoting Health and Development

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, if authorised. Further dental and optician checks will be arranged and completed for children and young people every 6 months

IFCS have access to various professionals including Family Therapists, who can provide assessments 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.

The qualified Independent specialist workers 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 may not incur any further charges to placing Local Authorities.

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 and will be required to complete courses in First Aid and Safe Care prior or immediately after approval.

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 regular support visits from an IFCS Social Worker.

All IFCS Foster Carers are required to complete daily 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.

The Recording Sheets will be collected 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.

The IFCS Social Worker, during their regular 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.

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 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.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

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, 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.

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.

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. All prospective Foster Carers must complete Child Protection training as part of the Skills to Foster course, and further advanced and update Child Protection courses throughout their career with IFCS. All staff must also complete such training. 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.

Safeguarding

Promoting welfare, wellbeing and safeguarding must all be part of the same strategy. 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.

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 and Placements Officer at the time of the Referral, Matching Assessment and initial placement.

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.

The initial Risk Assessment and plan must have the support of the responsible Local Authority and, where appropriate, the child or young person themselves.

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.

The Risk Assessment and plan must be updated at intervals decided by the child or young person's vulnerability. 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.

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.

Promoting Contact with Family

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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 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 NSPCC and Childline. The IFCS Social Worker and Foster Carer must encourage the child or young person to carry this card with them.

- 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 Children's Commissioner for Wales and NSPCC; access useful links to gain information; play games; or contact anyone within IFCS. The IFCS Social Worker will explain all these services to the child or young person.

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.

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.



Support Services – Foster Carers

Social Work Support

IFCS Social Workers will provide the main support to Foster Carers, and be their main point of contact. 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 leaving Foster Carers to “chase” professionals for support at a time of need or crisis.

Foster Carers will receive at least a minimum of one home visit per month 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 risks and specific outcomes) of the progress of the care provided and the development of the children and young people in placement. The monthly 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.

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.

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

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

All records of visits and contacts, as well as feedback from children and young people, their Responsible Local Authorities and Foster Carers, further Health and Safety Assessments, all required checks and assessments, and any complaints and compliments, will all be compiled into a report for the Foster Carers Annual Review.

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.

Foster Carers may be subject to additional review processes following serious complaints and/or child protection investigations, the resulting reports from which may be placed before the independent Foster Panel for their recommendations on approval status.

If following the Foster Panel's recommendations, the IFCS Registered Manager makes a Qualifying Determination to change or terminate a Foster Carers Approval status, the Foster Carer has the right to either appeal to the IFCS Registered Service Manager or appeal directly to the Independent Review Mechanism Cymru, 7 Cleeve House, Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff, CF14 5GP (Tel 0845 873 1305). Further information can be found at www.irmcymru.org.uk/fostering

Out of Hours Support

The office hours of IFCS are weekdays 9.00am to 17.00pm. During these hours the Cardiff and South East Wales office can be contacted on 02920 837320, and the Swansea and South West Wales branch on 01792 222510.

The General Office, Registered Service Manager can be contacted on the emails detailed below:

- General Office
- office@ifcswales.co.uk
- Service Manager
- servicemanager@ifcswales.co.uk

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.

A qualified and experienced Duty 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 Worker will be supported by an on-call Duty Manager.

The telephone number to contact the out of office hours Duty Social Worker is 02920 837320 – for both the South East and South West Wales regions. 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 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.

Foster Carer's Support Group Meetings

Foster Carer's Support Group Meetings will be held periodically throughout the year. All Foster Carers will be expected to attend these support group meetings.

To keep Support Groups effective and fit for purpose each Supporting 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.

Social Workers will consult with Foster Carers on issues they would wish to have discussed or facilitated in their part of the agenda. The Service Manager, Deputies and Social/Support Workers will attend support group meetings.

The agenda items will have been set by support Workers over the preceding month, in consultation with the Foster Carer.

Respite Care

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.

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.

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

Permission from the responsible Local Authority for the child/young person requiring respite care must be secured before any respite placement can be arranged.

Financial Support

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 in a 12 month period of approval as long as there is no restrictions to approval i.e. 0-18 years or 5-18yrs, short term, long term , emergency. Respite carers do not receive a retainer payment.

Retainer payments will commence following Foster Carers receiving and signing their Foster Care Agreement, and continue for a total of 10 weeks cumulatively over a calendar year whenever a Foster Carer has no children or young people in placement. After this period, no further retainer payments will be made until the next calendar year.

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.

Retainer payments will be reviewed if Foster Carers refuse three placement referrals which IFCS have carefully matched.

Retainer payments are paid to Foster Carers through BACS.

Retainer payments are paid weekly for individual foster homes.

Weekly allowances are paid when Foster Carers are looking after children and young people.

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.

Weekly allowances do not contribute to ongoing training costs .Weekly allowances contribute to necessary health and safety equipment like Smoke Alarms, safety gates, secure medicine cabinets, and First Aid Boxes .

Weekly allowances are paid to Foster Carers through BACS.

Procedure Manual

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. Access to the Procedure Manual is via the IFCS Web Site

Copies of the password will be provided to all Foster Carers to access the Procedure Manual online through the IFCS website.



Support Services – Staff Support

Supervision

Formal, recorded and confidential supervision will be carried out regularly with all staff .

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.

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.

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.

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.

All IFCS staff must attend formal supervision with their line manager every 4-6 weeks. The Supervisor and the Supervisee have responsibilities for ensuring Supervision takes place every 4-6 weeks, and is appropriately recorded.

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.

The Registered Service Manager will supervise the Deputy Service Managers, the Deputy Manager – Review and Quality Control, the Finance Manager, the Office Manager, Placement Manager

and Officer. The Deputy Service Managers will supervise all support staff, and the Office Manager will supervise all Administration Officers.

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 appropriate records (it will be either a Foster Carer's records or child or young person's records).

Annual Appraisal

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.

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.

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

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

Training

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

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

All IFCS staff have individual training programmes planned for them through consultation with their Line Manager through supervision and appraisal.

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

Procedure Manual

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.

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



Complaints and Representations

IFCS regularly reviews and revises its Complaints and Representations Policy and Procedure. This document was drawn up in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and provides the framework in which complaints and representations are managed within IFCS.

The Policy is in line with the Care Standards 2000, and the Children Act 1989 (Regulatory Reform and Complaints) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring that procedures are followed in accordance with guidance and legislation and that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. The Registered Manager will review any outcomes or recommendations and disseminate these to the team whilst also considering any practice or training issues that need to be taken forward.

Complaints can be made by, or on behalf of, children and young people, foster carers, IFCS employees, by other organisations and their employees and by members of the public.

A foster child or their family receiving a service from the IFCS commissioned by the local authority may complain directly to the respective local authority at any time.

Where the complaint involves both the IFCS and the respective local authority, an agreement will be reached between the two parties on which agency will investigate the complaint. IFCS staff inform children and young people, parents and foster carers of the respective local authority complaints system where appropriate.

Where necessary, particularly in respect of complaints by children and young people, IFCS will assist in the provision of advocacy/support facilities.

Quality Assurance issues arising out of complaints and allegations are managed and reported to the Quality Assurance Director who also monitors the quality and effectiveness of the IFCS complaints procedures.

Records of complaints are carefully recorded. Complaints, concerns and standards of care are regularly monitored and evaluated and are analysed annually at the time of the Quality of Care Review. IFCS also reviews terminations of approval following complaints or concerns being brought to panel.



Confidentiality and Access to Records

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

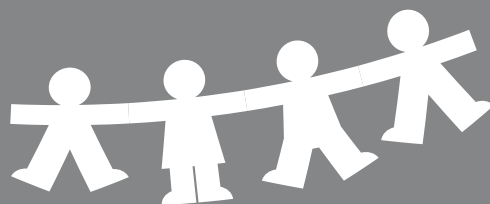
Generally, children and young people, and Foster Carers, will have access to all records in respect of them written by IFCS staff. External agencies and/or persons who have provided written reports or records to IFCS will have authority over the disclosure of their material.

IFCS 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.

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.

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.





Independent
Foster Care
Services

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