

Wrexham County Borough Council

Fostering Service

This document is available in Welsh

FOSTER CARER
HANDBOOK

2020



Contents

Section 1 – Foreword	3
Section 2 – Introduction.....	4
Section 3 – ‘Now I am a Foster Carer’	11
Section 4 – Finances.....	21
Section 5 – Caring for a child	25
Section 6 – Health and Safety	46
Section 7 – Health and Development.....	52
Section 8 – Education	61
Section 9 - Preparing for Adulthood and Independent Living	65
Section 10 – Concerns, complaints and allegations against foster carers.....	68
Section 11 – Complaints	71
Section 12 – Useful contacts.....	75
Section 13 – Index.....	76
Section 14 – Appendix / forms and policy library.....	77

Section 1 – Foreword



Mark Parry

Senior Head of Children's Services, Wrexham County Borough Council

Fostering is an essential part of how we look after children in Wrexham.

This handbook aims to give you all of the information needed to progress as a foster carer. From practical tips about health and development to details about the processes and documentation, this handbook will answer all of your questions and will act as a 'go to' guide. But, also be assured that our fostering team will be available to support you throughout your journey.

Thank you for helping us to look after our children in Wrexham. You will be making a real difference to the life of a child in care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Parry".



Andrew Atkinson

Lead Member for Children's Services

At Wrexham County Borough Council we are committed to being a good parent to the children and young people who are looked after or care leavers. All adults working for and with us share the responsibility to help them stay safe and healthy, enjoy life, and achieve their goals.

As a foster carer - whether providing long-, short- or emergency care - you will find everything you need in this handbook and I hope you find it useful. You have a vital role in the care and well-being of these children, and we want to ensure you have everything you need and feel supported while working with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Atkinson".

Section 2 – Introduction

Statement of Purpose

Every Fostering Service must have a statement of purpose outlining the services provided and the actions that will be undertaken to ensure these services are delivered to the required standards.

The Wrexham County Borough Council's Fostering Service Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018.

A copy of the Statement of Purpose is available in the appendix.

Structure of Children's Services

Wrexham's Children's Services is overseen by the Senior Head of Children's Services (Mark Parry). This role sits immediately below the Chief Officer for Social Care (Alwyn Jones).

Children's Services is divided in to four service areas, with each service area overseen by a Head of Service:

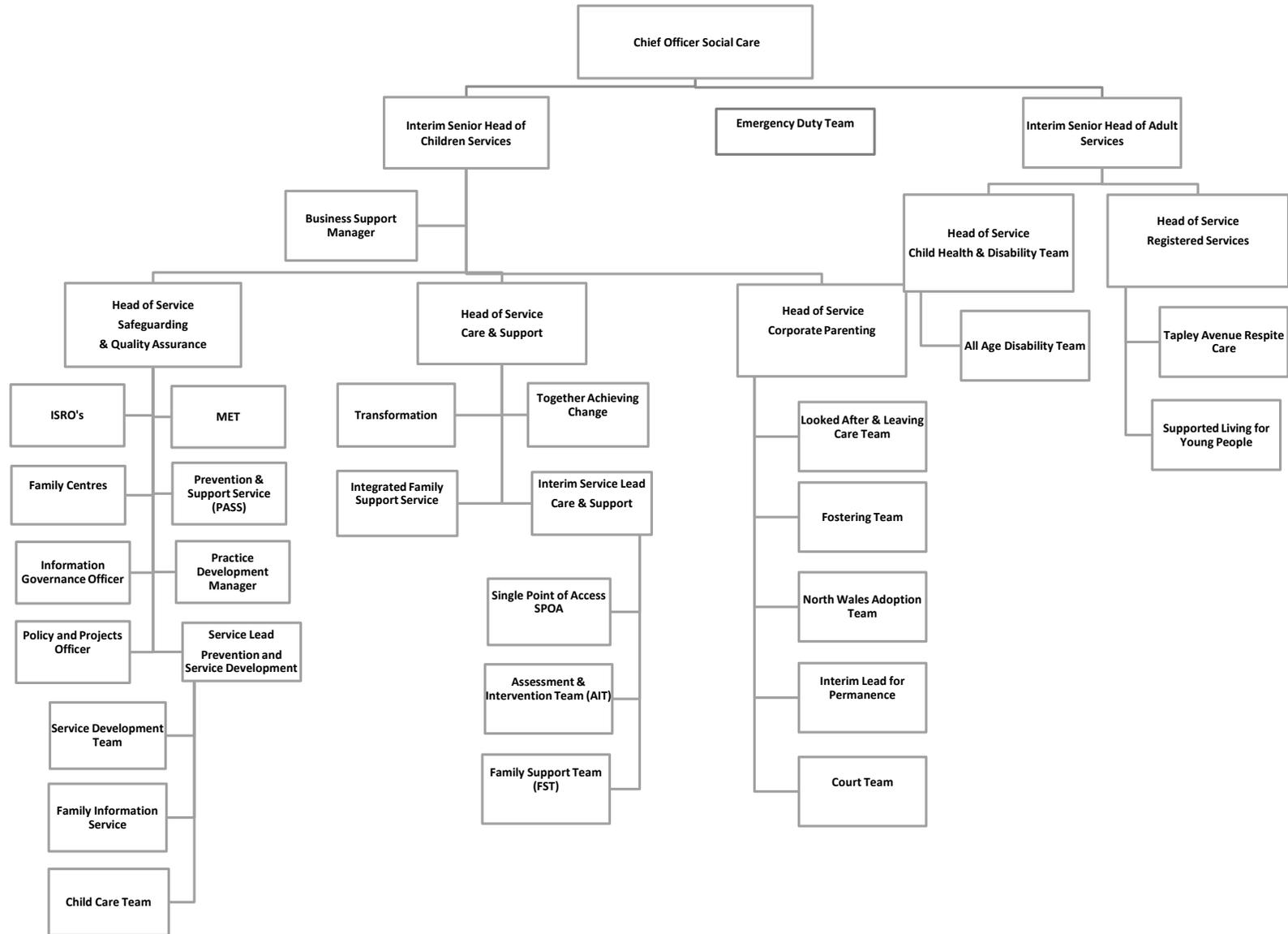
- Head of Service - Care and Support – Sarah Grant
- Head of Service - Corporate Parenting – Jo Spender
- Head of Service - Safeguarding & Quality Assurance – Rhian Thomas

The Fostering Service sits within Corporate Parenting and the day-to-day management of the service is overseen by the Team Manager – Zoe Brennan.

The Looked After and Leaving Care Team day-to-day management is overseen by the Team Manager - Mihaela Bucutea.

The below hierarchal structure shows the basic structure of Children's Services, with the Fostering Service highlighted for reference.

Children's Services Structure



Corporate Parenting Strategy

WCBC Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 – 2022 sets out the vision and plans for fulfilling the ambitions and corporate parenting responsibilities to all our children in care and care leavers. For more information, please refer to the appendix.

Our Pledge to all Children in Care and Care Leavers

WCBC have developed a Pledge for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Pledge is our commitment to being a good parent for the children and young people who are looked after or care leavers of the Local Authority. It sets out the expectations of us to provide a high level of provision of care support and opportunities for young people.

All adults who work for and with WCBC share a responsibility for helping Looked After Children to stay safe and healthy, enjoy life, and achieve their goals. As a WCBC Foster Carer, you are expected to support in ensuring that WCBC are successful in delivering on our promises to our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Our pledge comes in two versions one for 11 and under and one for over 11's.

11 and Under Pledge

Addewid i'n plant sy'n derbyn gofal ✨ **Pledge to our looked after children**

11 ACIAU AND UNDER

Addewidion sy'n cael eu gwneud i ti gan oedolion sy'n gweithio efo ti tra byddi di mewn gofal. Os dydi'r addewidion hyn ddim yn digwydd, dyweda wrth dy ofalwr neu dy weithiwr cymdeithasol

Promises made to you by adults who work with you while you are in care. If they are not happening tell your carer or social worker

- 1** Os gallwn ni, mi wnawn dy helpu di i gael CYSWLLT gyda'r bobol sydd bwysigaf i ti.
If we can, help you have CONTACT with people important to you.
- 2** Dy drin di efo PARH.
Treat you with RESPECT
- 3** Gwneud yn siŵr ein bod ni'n GWRANDO arna ti.
Make sure we LISTEN to you
- 4** Os gallwn ni, mi wnawn dy helpu di i gael CYSWLLT gyda'r bobol sydd bwysigaf i ti.
If we can, help you have CONTACT with people important to you.
- 5** Gwneud ein gorau i BEDIU NEWID dy weithiwr cymdeithasol di.
Try NOT TO CHANGE your social worker
- 6** Dy gadw di'n DDIOGEL.
Keep you SAFE
- 7** Gwneud yn siŵr ein bod ni'n GWRANDO arna ti.
Make sure we LISTEN to you
- 8** Dy helpu di i gael HWYL.
Help you to have FUN
- 9** Dy helpu di i fwynhau'r YSGOL.
Help you enjoy SCHOOL
- 10** Dweud y GWB wrtha ti bob amser.
Always tell you the TRUTH
- 11** Dy helpu di i fod yn IACH.
Help you to be HEALTHY
- 12** Gwneud yn siŵr ein bod ni'n GWRANDO arna ti.
Make sure we LISTEN to you
- 13** Dy helpu di i fod yn IACH.
Help you to be HEALTHY
- 14** Dweud y GWB wrtha ti bob amser.
Always tell you the TRUTH
- 15** Dy helpu di i gael HWYL.
Help you to have FUN
- 16** Dy helpu di i fwynhau'r YSGOL.
Help you enjoy SCHOOL
- 17** Dy helpu di i gael HWYL.
Help you to have FUN
- 18** Rhoi CARTREF ti'n ei hoffi i ti.
Give you a HOME you like
- 19** Dy helpu di i fwynhau'r YSGOL.
Help you enjoy SCHOOL
- 20** Rhoi CARTREF ti'n ei hoffi i ti.
Give you a HOME you like

wrexham
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CONOR IHWERTHWYLL
wreccsam

Over 11's Pledge

20 25 33 36 **DIOGEL**
Hi wnaem ni dy helpu di i gadau'n ddiogel ac ni fyddwn yma i ti pan mae arnat eih hangen ni.
SAFE
We will help you to stay safe and be there for you when you need us.

6 24 **IACH**
Byddwn yn dy helpu di i fyw bywyd iach yn gorfforol ac yn feddyliol.
HEALTHY
We will help you live a healthy life both physically and mentally.

15 31 **CYMDEITHASOL**
Byddwn yn dy gefnogi di i ymuno mewn gweithgareddau a gyda grwpiau a sefydliadau y byddi di eisiau ymuno â nhw fel nad wyt yn teimlo ar ben dy hun.
SOCIALISE
We will support you to join in with activities, groups and organisations that you want to so that you don't feel isolated.

16 20 **GONESTRWYDD**
Byddwn yn rhoi gwybod i ti am bopeth y mae geomys ti hawl i ddo mewn ffordd agored a chhir.
HONESTY
We will tell you about everything that you are entitled to in a clear and open way.

11 **DROS OVER 11**
Addewid i'n plant sy'n derbyn gofal
Mae'r addewidion hyn gan Gyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam, I bobl Ifanc sy'n derbyn gofal yn Wrecsam, wedi'u hysgrifennu gyda Chyngor Gofal Pobl Ifanc.
Bydd yr holl oedolion sy'n gweithio gyda chi yn sicrhau mai'r addewidion yw'r hyn sydd wir yn digwydd – os nad yw hyn yn digwydd, rithoch wybod i ni!
Mae'r niferoedd a ddangosir yn cynrychioli Erthyglau o Gonfensiwn y Cerbydoedd Unedig ar Hawliau'r plentyn (UNCRC). The numbers illustrated represent Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC).

11 **Pledge to our looked after children**
This pledge of promises is to Wrexham's young people in care, by Wrexham County Borough Council, written with the Young People's Care Council.
All adults who work with you will ensure that the pledge really is what happens – if it does not, tell us!

11 **CYSONDER**
Byddwn yn gwneud ein gorau i beidio newid dy weithwr cymdeithasol oni bai dy fod yn gofyn i ni wneud hynny. Os bydd rhaid i ni newid dy weithwr cymdeithasol, byddwn yn dweud wrtha ti pam.
CONSISTENT
We will try not to change your social worker unless you request to change them. If we do have to change your social worker, we will tell you why.

19 20 **CARTREF**
Byddwn yn rhoi lle sefydlog i ti fyw lle byddi di'n teimlo'n ddiogel ac yn cael dy ofalu amdanat.
HOME
We will give you a consistent place to live where you feel safe and cared about.

9 **CYSWLLT**
Lle bynnag y gallwn byddwn yn dy helpu di i weld dy deulu a phobl eraill sy'n bwysig i ti.
CONTACT
Where possible we will help you to see your family and other people important to you.

12 **GWRANDO ARNOCH**
Byddwn yn rhoi gwahanol ffordd i ti o leisiau dy fam. Byddwn yn gwrando arna ti ac yn cymryd dy safbwyntiau o ddiffri. Byddwn yn dy helpu di i ddedlo efo dy broblemau.
LISTENED TO
We will give you different ways to have your voice heard. We will listen and take your views seriously. We will help you deal with your problems.

16 20 **PARH**
Byddwn yn dy drin di mewn ffordd gyfeillgar a pharchus ac yn gwneud yn siŵr ein bod yn parchu dy gyfrinachedd a dy breifatrwydd.
RESPECT
We will treat you in a friendly and respectful way and act in a way to respect your confidentiality and privacy.

28 29 **LLWYDDOIAHT**
Byddwn yn dy gefnogi di i ennill sgiliau byw yn annibynnol, ac wrthi ti fynd yn hŷn yn dy baratoi di ar gyfer gadael gofal yn llwyddiannus ac i fyw ar dy ben dy hun fel oedolyn.
SUCCEED
We will support you to gain independent living skills, to prepare you as you get older to successfully leave care, become adults and live on your own.

23 29 **CYFLAWHI**
Byddwn yn dy helpu di i gael hwy i a chyflawni pethau gweith yn yr ysgol ac mewn gweithgareddau eraill.
ACHIEVE
We will help you to have fun and achieve great things, both in school and other activities.

wrexham
LOCAL AUTHORITY
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
WRECSAM

Regulatory Framework for Fostering Services

All Fostering Services in Wales are required to comply with the requirements set out in:

- [The Local Authority Fostering Services \(Wales\) Regulations 2018](#) and accompanying [Code of Practice for Local Authority Fostering Services 2019](#)
- [The Fostering Panels \(Establishment and Functions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#)

The regulations set out requirements that the Local Authority must meet to ensure the quality of care we provide as a Fostering Service.

Types of Fostering

There are a range of different foster care placements that are provided depending on the individual need of the child/ young person.

Respite

Sometimes foster carers are needed to provide respite, or short term, time limited care for children and young people. This can be a good option for people whose working patterns mean that they may not be available to foster children on a full time basis. These short breaks can help a child to remain in the home or help the stability of the placement.

Short term

This can mean anything from an overnight stay to a period of several months. Short term foster carers provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer term fostering placement or adoption arrangement can be made.

Long Term

Sometimes children will not be able to go back to live with their own families for a number of years, if at all. Longer term fostering allows children and young people to stay in a family where they can feel secure, while maintaining contact with their birth family.

Emergency

Emergency foster carers will need to be prepared to take a child into their home at any time of the night or day and have them stay with them for a few days. This type of fostering is used at short notice.

Children and young people are matched to the most appropriate type of foster care based on their needs and to help facilitate placement stability or remain or return home where relevant.

Kinship Care

Kinship care is an arrangement where a child who cannot be cared for by their parents goes to live with a relative or a family friend if it is safe to do so. Children's Social Workers and Fostering Social Workers encourage kinship care because they believe that kinship care may be better for some children than being looked after by a foster carer who is not known to the child. This can be because it often it is easier for them to keep in touch with their parents, friends and other family members if this is right for them. It also helps them to maintain their religion, language and culture and sense of identity.

Criteria for Consideration:

- You are a relative or friend of the child or family
- You will need a suitable bedroom for the child
- Your house, garden and pets must be safe for children

- You or members of your household must not have any violent convictions or convictions against children.
- The child must be happy and well looked after in your care

Short Breaks

Short break fostering offers support to children with disabilities and their families. This support comes in the form of short break carers. Short break foster carers offer support to families by providing them with weekend, overnight or day breaks. This support allows the child to enjoy and benefit from new experiences with you and your family and it also offers the parents a regular break for themselves or the opportunity to spend quality time with their other children.

Remand

Remand foster carers provide short-term care for young people between the ages of ten and seventeen whilst their case is resolved in the Youth Court. The length of a placement can vary between a few weeks and a few months. There are also some placements which are for only one or two nights; these are an alternative to young people spending the night in a police cell before appearing in court the next morning.

During each placement you will be expected to look after the young person and help ensure they keep to any bail conditions the court makes and accompany them to court appearances.

In addition to the standard training opportunities available to our foster carers, remand foster carers will receive specialist training and support from the Youth Justice Service [YJS] in helping young people through the court system and make positive changes in their life.

Therapeutic

The therapeutic foster care scheme, Wrexham Repatriation and Prevention Project (WRAP), aims to provide timely interventions to children and young people with complex emotional and behavioural needs. The scheme provides a daily living experience along with individual interventions to facilitate their personal growth, development and well-being. It is hoped that through such intervention, children will experience greater consistency across their social domains, placement stability and positive relationships. Overall the service aims to ensure that children and young people continue to remain in their own community.

Intensive support is made available to the Carers and to the children and young people in placement. Training, supervision and support is made available to the carers. The training is in addition to the minimum required for fostering. Training is in collaboration with the Fostering Team and WRAP and will include an ongoing programme of continuous development. Wrexham also provides attachment training through Workforce Development.

The carers work in partnership with the Fostering Service, other Social Work teams and WRAP to match the children and young person's needs to the placement.

Section 3 – ‘Now I am a Foster Carer’

What happens now I am approved and what does approval mean?

Approval means that you have been successfully assessed and approved as a Foster Carer for Wrexham County Borough Council.

Following the successful completion of all aspects of the assessment process, a report will have been forwarded to Wrexham County Borough’s Fostering Panel for recommendation on approval and any terms and conditions relating to that approval. You will have been given the prior opportunity to read and comment on the completed report and will have been encouraged to attend the Panel in person.

The majority of Fostering Panel members, including the Chair, are independent of the Fostering Service and act in a quality assurance role to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained.

Once recommended by the Fostering Panel, the final decision on approval will have been considered by the Agency Decision-Maker - Chief Officer for Social Care. The decision will have been made within seven working days of the panel meeting and will have been communicated both verbally and in writing to yourself as a prospective foster carer at the earliest opportunity.

Approval will have been agreed for one or more of the following:

- Periods of care to be provided i.e. generic foster care, connected persons, respite, short breaks, emergency, specific child/ren etc.
- Numbers of children to be looked after
- Gender and age ranges
- Family and friends (Connected Persons) who become carers.

These terms and conditions will have been agreed with you as a foster carer in order to reflect your strengths, own circumstances and those of your family, any other commitments and accommodation available. Approvals can be amended to reflect your changing circumstances and experience as a foster carer.

Foster Carer Agreement

Once the Agency Decision Maker has approved the recommendation for your application to become a foster carer for WCBC, you will be asked to sign the foster carer agreement. The foster carer agreement sets out the expectations on both the Fostering Service and the foster carer. A foster carer cannot have a child placed with them until they have agreed to and signed the foster carer agreement.

The foster carer agreement is a written agreement covering the matters specified in [Schedule 3 of the Fostering Panels \(Establishment and Functions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2018](#).

Allocated Social Worker

Once you are approved as a foster carer for WCBC, you will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker. The role of the Supervising Social Worker is to support and supervise foster carers. The Supervising Social Worker's first responsibility is to the child in placement, even though they do not have case management responsibility for the child.

Supervision

The Supervising Social Worker will visit you regularly and it is now a requirement that the child/young person is seen every quarter. The Supervising Social Worker will view the child's bedroom on each visit.

Supervision for foster carers is a formal process for meetings between foster carers and their Supervising Social Worker. The meeting is different from the day to day (informal) home visits which provide support to the carer.

Visits for generic foster carers and connected persons carers will be undertaken at least once every six to eight weeks, with formal supervision quarterly.

Visits for respite foster carers are every twelve weeks and it is a requirement to incorporate formal supervision within these visits.

Therapeutic foster carers have to be visited every four weeks and formal supervision every eight weeks.

Supervising social workers will also undertake unannounced visits to your home. There will be at least one unannounced visit each year.

There should be telephone contact at least once a month.

Supervising Social Workers are responsible for ensuring that the standard of care offered to children by foster carers promotes their overall wellbeing. This includes caring practices and assisting carers to achieve an appropriate standard of care for the children. Supervision meetings should be an opportunity for all parties to raise issues of concern.

The Supervising Social Workers also have a primary responsibility for assisting in the skills development of carers, identifying training needs with them and making plans to meet these.

The report of each supervision meeting should record any concerns expressed, any support needs expressed by you as the carer and how these will be met. The supervision report will be signed by all parties and returned by the Fostering Service.

A copy will be provided to you as a foster carer for your records.

Support

As well as the support offered from your Supervising Social Worker, you will have access to other ongoing support such as:

- Coffee mornings – an opportunity to meet with other foster carers on a monthly basis
- Monthly newsletters to inform you about events, celebrations and opportunities

The Fostering Service also hold an annual Christmas Party for foster carers, children and young people as well as Awards Evenings to celebrate the achievements of foster carers and young people.

Emergency / Out of Hours Support

In the event of a difficult placement, or if you are a newly approved foster carer with your first placement, a Social Worker will be on hand to offer advice and support.

You may also contact the Emergency Hour's Duty Team outside of normal office hours. If a serious emergency arises, and a home visit is required, this will be provided by a Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering Service or a member of the Emergency Duty Team.

Out of Hours Support – the **Emergency Duty Team** can be contacted on **0345 053 3116**.

If the child is in immediate danger you should call the Police immediately on 999.

Annual Reviews

As set out in The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018 all foster carers must undergo an Annual Review.

The main aim of the Annual Review is to determine whether approval should be renewed, and whether there should be any change in the terms of approval.

The review will include written pro-forma reports from the Child's Social Worker (including a health and safety risk assessment), children and young people in placement and the household, and the foster carers. Once completed, it will be signed by you and your Supervising Social Worker.

The Annual Review is an opportunity to look at progress in meeting targets set for the improvement of skills, to set new goals and develop an action plan for the next year.

Training needs are assessed and commitment to further training agreed and continuation of the payments linked to skills is also considered.

The Fostering Service must seek and take into account the views of:

- You as the foster parent;

- (subject to the child's age and understanding) any child placed with you
- And in the case of a regulated Fostering Services Provider, any Local Authority which has within the preceding year placed a child with the foster parent.

The Review Report will be considered by the Fostering Panel or in a review with the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and The Fostering Service Team Manager.

The minutes will be recorded on your individual file on the Fostering Services' secure drive. The outcome of the panel meeting will be communicated to you by your Supervising Social Worker and will be provided in writing, following the Agency Decision-Maker's endorsement of a recommendation of approval.

Resignation and Termination of approval

If you decide that you want stop fostering, you will need to resign by writing a short letter of resignation to the Fostering Team Manager. The termination of approval will take effect from 28 days from the date on which the notice is received by the Fostering Service. You will receive a letter confirming that you have been deregistered as a foster carer with WCBC.

Following a review of your approval the Fostering Panel may recommend to the Agency Decision-Maker not to continue your approval as a foster carer. If this decision is ratified by the Agency Decision-Maker you will receive a letter known as a qualifying determination letter, outlining the reasons for the determination. There are three options available to you:

Option 1 - Accept the determination

Option 2 - Submit written representations to the Fostering Service within 28 days of the date of the qualifying determination letter – (If you choose the latter, the Fostering Service is required to refer the case back to their Fostering Panel for a review of that proposal)

Option 3 - Apply for review by the Independent Review of Determinations Panel – an information leaflet on this process will be provided with the qualifying determination letter from the Agency Decision-Maker

When an application for review is made to the Independent Review Panel, the Fostering Service Agency Decision Maker will be sent the Review Panel's recommendation. The Agency Decision-Maker will then proceed to make their final decision taking into account the Review Panel's recommendation, as well as the original Fostering Panel's recommendation.

As soon as practicable after reaching the final decision, the Fostering Service will notify you in writing of the decision and include the reasons for making the decision, if it has been decided to terminate your approval or change the terms of approval.

Where the Review Panel has considered a case, the Fostering Service must send a copy of the notification to the Welsh Ministers.

The final decision about your approval/terms of approval will continue to rest with the Fostering Service.

Conflict of Interest

As a foster carer it is essential to note that the interests of the children or young people are paramount and any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may be detrimental to the welfare of a child or young person could be regarded as a breach of trust.

All those involved in the Fostering Service must be impartial and honest in the conduct of their business and they should remain beyond suspicion at all times.

Code of Conduct

As a foster carer you will be bound by the respective Codes of Conduct and Corporate Personnel Policies and Procedures and the Care Council for Social Care Wales Code of Conduct. In general, areas covered include:

- Conduct of the highest standards to ensure public confidence
- Conflict between duty and private interests
- Pecuniary interest
- Confidentiality
- Gifts and hospitality
- Commercial practices

Potential Conflicts of Interest

If you become aware or a matter arises that could be potentially viewed as a conflict of interest, you should, without fear of victimisation, immediately inform your Supervising Social Worker who will take measures to assess the potential conflict and ensure that it does not occur.

Declaration of Interest

There may be occasions when the Fostering Service will need to be aware of situations where those involved in the service are also involved in other activities that impact on the aims of the Fostering Service.

Foster carers and potential foster carers therefore must declare all such interests. This will serve to protect you from potential, subsequent allegations of dual interest.

Outside Employment

Foster carers should not engage in outside employment that may conflict with the work of the Fostering Service. They must consult their Supervising Social Worker if they suspect that there may be a conflict of interest in a particular area.

Terms of Approval

Foster carers must not register with any other Local Authority or Independent Fostering Agency whilst approved by WCBC as a foster carer.

Breach of the Code of Conduct

In the event of any breach of the Code of Conduct by a person involved in the Fostering Service there could be a consideration of termination of approval made against a foster carer.

Recording

Foster carers are expected to keep records in line with Policy 5.11 'Records to be kept by Foster Carers'.

You will be provided with a lockable box to enable you to keep records relating to the children you foster confidential and secure.

As a foster carer you are required to record and contribute to records in order:

- To help provide continuity for a child or young person – for example, record of child's eating habits
- To build information about a child's behaviour patterns
- To monitor a child's progress during a placement
- To assist in planning and decision making
- To assist in making a case for additional resources
- To protect you in the event of an allegation being made
- To act as an aid to memory
- To record illness, accident, injury, absconding or any safeguarding issues, for example risk of sexual exploitation,
- To provide evidence for court
- To record pocket money, clothing and medication
- To record memories and achievements from the child's life

There are a number of different key records which both you and Children's Services are required to keep.

The Authority is required to keep case records for children in foster care. These records will include looked after children (LAC) documentation as required by the Assessment Framework and documents specific to the Fostering Service. The case records are a statutory requirement and are to help improve outcomes for children by improving their assessment, planning, provision and review of services.

You can make an important contribution to records for children and young people. Your views will be asked and recorded in a child's case file. In addition you make your own records.

Placement Records

You should keep copies of your foster care agreement and annual reviews. Foster care agreements should be kept confidential and referred to regularly as it has a wealth of information to help you care for the child or young person. You will have input into both these records.

Diary recording by Foster Carers

For each child placed with you, a diary will be provided for you to record day to day events. Training will be provided in relation to what / when / how to record in the diary. The diary will be reviewed regularly by the Supervising Social Worker and signed off in supervision sessions. Foster carers should include notes on:

- Accidents
- Illnesses
- Outcomes of any contact arrangements
- Issues of concern
- Any challenging behaviour
- Details of any measures of control
- Positive aspects of things that went well.
- Achievements and outcomes
- Health
- Education
- Disclosures

When completing the diary foster carers should follow a number of guidelines:

- Use plain English – don't use jargon or abbreviations
- Keep in mind the young person when writing up an event
- Where required write verbatim
- Write hand written records legibly
- Cross out errors with a single line, initial and date it
- Keep the information factual
- Sign and date the entries and at the end of the page

As a foster carer you should attempt to write in the diary as soon as an event takes place so the information is fresh in your mind and write in the first person so that record gives a clearer picture of events.

These diaries are the property of Wrexham County Borough Council and, as such, should be returned to the Fostering Team at the end of a placement or on an annual basis. In

regards to where a respite placement is provided the main foster carer should ensure that the child's diary goes to the respite carer for each respite arrangement. This ensures continuity of care.

Record of Accidents, injury and Illnesses

You should record all accidents, injury or illnesses in the child's diary as well as on an incident form (see appendix) and notify your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker as soon as possible. If the incident happens outside of office hours, the Emergency Duty Team is to be notified.

If any treatment is required you should follow the guidelines in relation to medical consent. Please note all forms submitted will be attached to our database.

Financial Records

You will be provided with guidance on fostering allowances, fees and records that you should maintain. All money received for the children should be recorded. In addition to this recording, pocket money and clothing allowances should, where possible, be signed by the child or young person to confirm they have received the money. When a child leaves their placement a transfer of monies form should be completed and signed by the Supervising Social Worker receiving the money at the end of the placement. Financial records will be checked in supervision sessions.

Electronic Recording & Emails

Where case recordings are typed these should be printed and kept in the child's paper file, which is locked. Electronic files should then immediately be deleted from any electronic device used. They should also be deleted from the device's recycle bin.

Any confidential information sent or stored electronically should be password protected. Foster carers who choose to record electronically should be saving the information in files which are clearly marked 'OFFICIAL / SENSITIVE'.

When emailing information to staff within the department, foster carers should refrain from using individual children / young people's names within the subject bar. Instead use initials only and mark the email 'OFFICIAL / SENSITIVE'. Any documents attached to the email should be password protected. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in order to obtain the correct password.

Delegated Authority – what decisions can I make?

As a foster carer you should have the delegated authority to take day-to-day parenting decisions. This enables you to provide the best possible care for the child.

The delegated authority form is a way to ensure that children and young people in foster care are able to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers and that you are given enough autonomy to make everyday decisions about the children in your care.

The Social Worker will take time to explain to the parents what this consent entails and will make the parents aware of the implications, while respecting their rights and their wish to keep some appropriate control about the care of their children.

You will be provided with a copy of the signed Delegated Authority form as soon as possible after the placement, if it is not available at the point of placement. A copy of the Delegated Authority Form and corresponding policy are included in the appendix.

Training

As a foster carer you are expected to complete regular training in order to develop your practice. Courses and refresher courses on key topics, such as child protection are mandatory and other training requirements are described in an individual development plan agreed between you and your Supervising Social Worker. A range of appropriate training opportunities are offered from both the Fostering Service and Council as a whole, including online e-learning modules.

Please see below for a list of the relevant mandatory / good practice training:

Mandatory Training:	Additional Training – Good Practice:
Post approval Training – Skills to Foster	On-line Safety
All Wales Basic Joint Safeguarding	De-escalation (MAPA)
Safeguarding Refresher (every 3 years)	Life Story Work
Paediatric First Aid	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
Attachment	ADHD
Food Safety	Self-harm / emotional health
	Substance misuse
	Solihull Approach
	Domestic Abuse

Mandatory training **must** be completed in the 1st year of approval.

Further Training for Foster Carers

As a foster carer there is an opportunity open to you to progress and gain further qualifications. A City and Guilds Health and Social Care (Level 2 and Level 3) is available to study. As a foster carer, if you wish to take on this training a recommendation of appropriateness will be made at your review. As an Authority we encourage and support all foster carers to carry out further studies and training. This qualification is completed in partnership with Coleg Cambria.

Eligibility to undertake the Level 2 and Level 3 in Health and Social Care is subject to the following criteria:

- A minimum of one year post approval fostering experience
- A positive annual review
- Adherence to care/placement plan
- Attendance at Looked After Reviews
- Evidence of a good quality of foster care delivered continuously over the previous year since review or approval.
- Appropriate endings to placements i.e. an agreed and planned conclusion to the care episode is reached.
- In the event of the foster carer wanting to end a placement, 28 days' notice is required in writing. The placement will then be terminated 28 days after the receipt of the written notification.
- Satisfactory reports from the Child Care Social Workers including end of placement reports.
- Completion of 4 of the mandatory training modules

It is acknowledged that some foster carers with specific approvals may find it difficult to meet the criteria but as the scheme is intended to aid continuous development in all aspects of fostering they can be included to widen their role.

Section 4 – Finances

Payment of fees and allowances

It is Wrexham County Borough Council Fostering Service's policy to pay fostering allowances at a rate recommended annually by Welsh Government.

In addition a fee is payable to foster carers who have demonstrated competence by achieving the City and Guilds Health and Social Care (Level 2 and Level 3) (assessed as a foster carer) and for foster carers involved in specialist roles, such as therapeutic foster care and mother and baby placements involving Court directed parenting assessments.

Discretionary payments may also be paid to reimburse foster carers as follows:-

- Insurance for damage caused by foster children;
- Non routine travel
- Any additional expenses agreed resulting from the special needs of a child in placement;
- Payments might be available for adaptations / extensions to property for existing Foster Carers who wish to adapt / extend to provide a permanent home for a fostered child, in cases where adoption or returning home are not possible / appropriate for the child.

Pocket Money

Pocket money for a looked after child is an entitlement and does not have to be earned. Pocket money forms part of the Fostering Allowance and should be given directly to the child (or paid in to the child's savings account).

DLA

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a tax-free benefit for children to help with the extra costs of looking after a child who:

- is under 16
- has difficulties walking or needs much more looking after than a child of the same age who does not have a disability

DLA is paid by the Department for Work and Pensions to individuals who are disabled in order to provide financial support to meet the additional needs that they have as a result of this disability.

The adult making the claim for DLA on behalf of the child will become the appointee. Where the child is in foster care, the foster carer should become the appointee for the DLA on behalf of the child.

Where a child is taken into care and the child is already in receipt of DLA, Children's Services will support the parent to end their involvement in the claim and advise them of the implications for their other benefits (e.g. Carers Allowance).

Where a child moves foster placement, the foster carer should relinquish their appointee status for the child and where appropriate, provide details of the next appointee to DWP.

The child's Social Worker and foster carer, in consultation with the child (where appropriate) should agree to the manner in which the DLA is to be spent. This decision must be approved by a Head of Service and must be formally recorded on the child's file. The decision is to be reviewed on an ongoing basis, as part of the child's LAC Review Meetings.

Foster carers who apply for DLA on behalf of the child must inform the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker of the application and receipt of benefit if such application is successful.

The foster carer and Social Workers, in partnership with the parents if appropriate, should have agreed how the DLA should be spent and included in the child's Care Plan. A record should be kept by foster carers of how the allowance is spent through the DLA form (see appendix). This record should be shared with Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers in supervision.

The expenditure of DLA should be monitored through use of the DLA form available from the Fostering Team during supervision sessions.

For further information, please refer to policy 5.19 - Disability Living Allowance – Looked After Children and Foster Carers (see appendix).

Payments for religious festivals, birthdays and holidays

The Fostering Allowance is intended to cover the cost of looking after a child and as a result no additional allowances will be paid, with the exception of:

Religious festival grant e.g. Christmas - a sum equal to one weeks Fostering Allowance is payable for each child in the foster home during the period of the festival.

Birthday grant - an allowance equal to one week's Fostering Allowance for a child that age will be paid.

Holiday grant – a maximum allowance equal to two weeks Fostering Allowances will be paid for each child in foster care dependent on status of placement. Completed Financial Assistance Form and receipts are required.

For further guidance on the Fostering Allowances, please refer to the appendix: 'Fostering Allowances 2019/2020'

Transport

WCBC set the expectation that foster carers will meet the transport needs of a child in placement. However, if a child needs to be provided with transport on a regular basis this should be recorded in the Care Plan or as part of the statutory visit. The reasons why a foster carer may be unable to transport a child must be identified at the earliest opportunity and a clear rationale must be provided.

It is expected that transport costs will be covered within the standard fostering maintenance allowance e.g. school runs, social activities, reviews, contact arrangements for journeys of up to 20 miles per month. However, if foster carers are asked to undertake transport of over 20 miles, a reimbursement of 30p per mile is payable.

Please refer to the Travel Claim Form in the appendix.

Self Employment, Tax Relief and Additional Benefits

All foster carers are treated as self-employed for tax purposes and are required to complete an annual self-assessment tax return.

When you become approved as a foster carer, you must also register with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as 'self-employed'. HMRC will charge a penalty if you do not register within six months of the end of the tax year in which they become approved. It is important that you also start keeping records of the children you foster, their ages and the dates you began and ceased looking after them.

Anyone who is self-employed must also register to pay Class 2 National Insurance Contributions.

Foster Carers are entitled to a tax relief from HMRC which comprises a fixed amount of £10,000 for each household for a full year. On top of this, foster carers are provided with a 'qualifying care relief'. The qualifying amount will depend on several factors including how many children you have fostered or are currently fostering, the age of the foster children, and how long you were looking after them during that tax year. The amount of weekly tax relief for a child under 11 it is £200 a week, for children 11 and over, it is £250.

HMRC has created a free e-learning module specifically for foster carers. It includes information about self-employment, how to register as self-employed, the 'qualifying care relief', record keeping and more. <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/courses/syob2/fc/index.htm>

Foster carers who are approved by WCBC and have fostered a child in the relevant tax year preceding the current tax year are eligible for a 75% reduction in their council tax bill. This includes Generic and Kinship Foster Carers, as well as Foster Carers who are approved by WCBC but reside out-of-county. For more information, please refer to the policy in the appendix (Discretionary Council Tax Discount Scheme) or contact the Fostering Team on 01978 295316.

Foster carers who are employees of WCBC are also entitled to an additional 5 days annual leave per year. For part time staff this will be pro-rata in hours.

Insurance

As an approved foster carer, you will be provided with public liability and all risks cover as part of the support from the Local Authority.

Foster carers are also provided, through membership of the fostering network with legal protection insurance in addition to impartial advice and information.

WCBC recognises the additional risk to foster carers which can be generated by the placement of a child and so the Fostering Service will always strive to be sympathetic to their position. However, all foster carers must always take responsibility for informing their insurers of their status to ensure cover is not invalidated. This includes buildings, contents, car and travel insurance.

The Local Authority provides the following insurance cover for foster carers:-

Building and Contents

Loss or damage to buildings and contents belonging to the foster family occurring directly at the hands of the child in their care. Vehicles are excluded. The sum insured is £100,000 per family subject to an excess of £100.

Public Liability:

To insure foster carers for legal liability to meet compensation and claimant's costs in respect of injury or death to persons, damage to property arising out of the fostering of children in care of Wrexham County Borough Council up to £5,000,000 with no excess. Foster carers are also covered by this public liability insurance for claims against them, such as for allegations of abuse, by the looked after child they are responsible for looking after or have looked after.

Claims under the policy should be made in writing to:

Insurance
Finance & ICT Department
Guildhall
Wrexham
LL11 1NF
Tel: 01978 292214

For more information, please refer to the appendix: 'Policy 5.3 – Insurance for Foster Carers'.

Section 5 – Caring for a child

Matching

It is important that measures are taken to carefully match foster carers to children to ensure that the child's needs are safely met and to avoid situations that could expose the child and foster carer to harm.

Each looked after child will have an assessment of needs in accordance with the Assessment Framework for children in need and their families. The child's needs will be clearly documented in the care and support plan such as:

- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Age
- Indication where the child needs to be placed with siblings
- Geography
- Need for contact
- Location of school
- Whether the child needs attention or company
- Skills and resources needed to meet the child's needs and behaviours
- Period of placement

In addition to these, it is important that the wishes and feelings of the child and the family are considered and will be recorded as part of the matching process. The looked after child will be matched with the foster carer who can best meet the needs of the child. The Fostering Service uses a variety of strategies to match the child and the foster carer. A successful match will provide the stability a child needs during this difficult period in their life.

If it is clear from the outset that not all the needs of the child can be met by a particular foster carer, then appropriate training for the foster carer to understand the needs of the child should be considered. If the match is deemed viable then the training requirements will be written into the placement agreement.

Placement Planning

The child's Social Worker must prepare a Placement Plan (as part of the child's Care and Support Plan), which sets out how the placement will contribute to meeting the child's needs, as per schedule 3 of the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2015](#).

The Placement Plan should be prepared prior to the child moving in to the placement. However, if it is not reasonably practicable to prepare the placement plan before making the placement, the Placement Plan must be prepared within 5 working days of the start of the placement.

Emergency Placements

Wrexham Fostering Service or the North East Wales Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team (EDT) may contact you if an emergency placement is required. We always aim to contact you for children who are within your approval range, however on occasions we may contact you in an emergency for children who are outside of this range. It is important that you acknowledge that you have a choice when agreeing to any placement/s.

If you are available and agree to a placement you will receive the following information from the fostering service:

- A Placement Agreement form, which will be completed prior to or within 72 hours of placement.
- A Safe Care Plan – which will be completed jointly by Fostering Service Social Worker, Child Social Worker, Child (if appropriate) and Foster Carers.
- The Local Authority Delegation of Consent Form - to be completed by the Child Care Social Worker and provided to the foster carer
- The Care and Support Plan for the child - provided by the child's Social Worker
- Placement Information Record - provided by the child's Social Worker
- Variation / exemption of approval form (if applicable)

If a child is being placed with you out of hours by EDT the following information should be provided to you:

- Placement Agreement Form
- Placement Information Record
- Care and Support Plan for the child

If you do not receive any of the above please contact your Supervising Social Worker.

As a foster carer it is vital you ensure that you have the necessary equipment to undertake the task. Your Supervising Social Worker will identify any requirements as part of the placement agreement and it will be reviewed regularly.

Settling in

Children who become “looked after” bring a variety of experiences and emotions with them. It is important to remember that being removed from home, parents, family and friends, whatever the circumstances, is a traumatic and distressing experience for children. They will need comfort and reassurance. Children need to be made to feel welcome but not overwhelmed with attention and fuss.

They need to be helped to understand why they are not living with their family and to adjust to living with strangers. Children will not necessarily remember all they are told about the move and the new family. They need patience and understanding and the opportunity to come to terms with their changed circumstances.

It is important that when the child visits prior to placement and/or on the day they are placed that their bedroom is ready. There should be space for their clothing and possessions. They

may need to have familiar toys etc. around them. Having photographs of their family maybe helpful, discuss this with the child's social worker who will advise you if this is appropriate.

It is tempting to want to treat the new foster child like a guest to make them feel wanted and to like us. But it is better to be honest about your expectations from the beginning.

Otherwise the child can become confused and unsettled when things become more normal. The foster placement agreement will help clarify everybody's expectations.

It will be necessary to think hard about your own 'House Rules' and expectations from the outset and explain these to the child so that they are not expected to adapt to these without knowledge of what they are.

Identity

Each child has his/her identity and self esteem valued and promoted; social workers and foster carers will work cooperatively to enhance the child's confidence and feeling of self worth.

The child's race culture, religion and language must be respected. And discrimination should be challenged on behalf of any child. You should promote the children's cultural and religious heritage and identity.

Beliefs – you may have your own strong belief. These should not be imposed upon a child and issues such as church attendance or household values need to be discussed and recorded in the Foster Placement Agreement.

Promoting a positive identity and positive attitudes to birth parents

It is important to promote positivity regarding a child's identity including the positive promotion of their sexual identity and diversity when caring for young people who may be gay or transgender or when working with family members where the same considerations apply.

Furthermore, foster carers must maintain a positive attitude towards the child's birth parents and their wider family, supporting and promoting contact with them and refraining from judging the child's home environment, to support children in maintaining a positive view of themselves.

There may be occasions when this is complicated by the sometimes extreme behaviours of the birth family and this expectation does not imply that the reality of the parent's behaviour should be concealed from the child. Nonetheless, a positive attitude should be maintained as far as possible.

Names

- Names are very important – a child's name needs to be respected and should not be shortened/amended or changed without permission and discussion with the Fostering Service and parents.

- Children should be discouraged from calling you as foster carers 'mummy and daddy' / 'mum and dad' as this can be confusing for a child and upsetting to birth parents. The feelings of your own children also need to be considered.
- A child retains their own name when fostered. Even if a foster child expresses a wish to change their name this can only be achieved via the court.

Personal Possessions

- Children's personal possessions should be respected, valued and kept safe. For some children this may be their only connection to their past and will therefore need to be part of their life journey and should always go with the child when moving on.
- For babies and young children familiar smells and textures facilitate the child to feel safe and secure. We encourage foster carers and adoptive parents to ensure that they take their bedding and familiar objects with the child to help the settling in process to new adoptive placements.
- **Under no circumstances should children's possessions be transported in black bin bags or plastic carrier bags.** Travel bags / boxes are available from your Supervising Social/ Support Worker if required.

Life story work

Life story work should commence from the child's first placement and should include respite placements.

Foster carers have an important role to play in helping looked after children preserve memories and achievements from their childhood. These memories are usually of birthdays, Christmas, holidays, sports days and family events, which they can reflect on as adults and with their own children.

Achievement awards and copies of their school reports should be kept by foster carers as part of the 'child's memory' and should be included in the life story work undertaken.

The information should be collected in albums and/or memory boxes, whichever is deemed the most appropriate. These materials will be supplied by the fostering service.

Life story work should move with the child if they change placement.

Training on life journey work is available for foster carers, ask your Supervising Social Worker for further details.

Mind Of My Own Apps

WCBC use Mind Of My Own Apps for children and young people to express their views. It is a web application that gives children and young people an instant and convenient way to express their views.

Mind Of My Own Apps have two features – the One app and Express:

One app

The One app helps older children communicate their views in a way that suits them.

Children create an account on the One app and once signed up, they can use it on their own anytime, 24/7. The One app helps children prepare for any upcoming meetings they have, report problems, share good news etc.

The One app can be:

- Downloaded on the app store or google play
- Accessed on the web via <https://one.mindofmyown.org.uk/>
- Used independently, 24/7, on any device
- Co-used with a worker on a worker's account
- Used for meetings, reviews, to share good news and to sort out problems

Express app

Express is an accessible app for younger children and those with additional needs to express their views.

The Express app:

- Uses expressive pictures, minimal text and affirming sounds
- Can be used for any education, health or social care planning or review process
- Is designed to be co-used with a professional (cannot be used independently)

The child's Social Worker is responsible for introducing the child to Mind Of My Own apps and to ascertain which app is most appropriate for the child, based on their age, level of understanding and whether the child has a disability and / or additional need.

Foster carers, should, where appropriate encourage and facilitate children to use Mind Of My Own apps. This should include ensuring children can access this privately if they wish to.

Foster carers must not set up young people's accounts using their own email addresses.

Caring for children under the age of one

The NHS has the most up to date information about caring for a baby:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/being-a-parent/?tabname=your-newborn>

Sleeping

For the first 6 months your baby should be in the same room as you when they're asleep, both day and night. They should sleep on their back, in a cot or Moses basket.

SIDS / Cot Death

It's not known why some babies die suddenly and for no apparent reason from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or cot death.

Experts do know placing a baby to sleep on their back reduces the risk, and exposing a baby to cigarette smoke or allowing them to overheat increases the risk.

It's also known there's an association between sleeping with your baby on a bed, sofa or chair (co-sleeping) and SIDS.

How to reduce the risk of SIDS:

- Place your baby on their back to sleep, in a cot in the same room as you, for the first 6 months.
- Don't smoke during pregnancy or breastfeeding, and don't let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby.
- Don't share a bed with your baby if you have been drinking alcohol, if you take drugs, or you're a smoker.
- Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair.
- Don't let your baby get too hot or cold.
- Keep your baby's head uncovered. Their blanket should be tucked in no higher than their shoulders.
- Place your baby in the "feet to foot" position, with their feet at the end of the cot or Moses basket.

Feeding

Advice and guidance in this area is subject to change in line with the most recent research findings available. The most up to date information and guidance on feeding, sterilising bottles and making up infant formula can be found on the NHS website or from your Health Visitor.

More information relating to feeding can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/?tabname=your-newborn>

Bathing

You don't need to bathe your baby every day, but if they really enjoy it, there's no reason why you shouldn't.

It's best not to bathe your baby straight after a feed or when they're hungry or tired. Make sure the room you're bathing them in is warm.

Have everything you need at hand: a baby bath or clean washing-up bowl filled with warm water, two towels, a clean nappy, clean clothes and cotton wool.

Never leave your baby alone in the bath, not even for a second.

For more information, visit the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/washing-your-baby/>

Baby Car seats

Children must normally use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135 centimetres tall, whichever comes first.

Children over 12 or more than 135cm tall must wear a seat belt.

You can choose a child car seat based on your child's height or weight.

The [Child Car Seats website](#) (ROSPA) has information on how to choose a seat and travel safely with children in cars.

Baby equipment and toys

Baby equipment and toys must carry the CE mark, and be in good condition.

Top toy safety tips from ROSPA:

- Buy toys only from reputable outlets - look for the CE symbol
- Make sure the toy is suitable for the child – check the age range
- Be particularly careful with toys for children under three
- Be wary of young children playing with older children's toys
- Check for loose hair and small parts, sharp edges and points
- Ensure that garden swings and slides are robust and are not a strangulation hazard
- Check toys regularly for wear and repair or dispose of them where necessary
- Keep play areas tidy
- Follow the instructions and warnings provided with toys
- Supervise young children at play

For more information on toy safety, visit ROSPA's ['Toy safety' webpage](#).

Whether buying a pushchair or buggy new or second-hand, always look for a reference to a safety standard – this will be typically BS 7409 or BSEN 1888:2003.

Always check that the product you are buying is safe and has not been involved with a product recall. Also, it needs to be marked as complying with the safety standard(s) mentioned. Check that all harnesses have five straps, and be aware that non-reclining seats are not suitable for a child under six months old.

Before you put your child in a buggy or pushchair:

- Check the brakes (lock and unlock them and then push)
- Check that the product is properly unfolded and "locked" together correctly
- Check that there is no damage, including sharp edges or torn fabric.

For more information on safety of pushchairs and buggies, visit ROSPA's ['Pushchairs and Buggies'](#) webpage.

Caring for a child who has been abused

When a child is placed, you will be provided with full information about any abuse a child has experienced including when abuse is suspected, but has not been proven. Often the extent of the abuse or neglect a child has experienced will not be known when the child is initially placed with you and this may become known as the placement progresses. You **must** therefore always follow 'safer caring' practice with all children you foster.

It is essential that any additional information is shared immediately with the Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker, as this will help all involved with a child to understand what care and / or support is needed.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse includes hitting, slapping, over or misuse of medication, undue restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

When children are placed, it may be obvious from bruising or other injuries that they have been physically abused. Foster carers may be asked to assist with taking the child to health / medical assessment appointments.

The nature of the injuries a child has suffered may be shocking and give rise to anger at those who inflicted or it is suspected inflicted the harm. However, foster carer's may still be expected to meet with birth parents and family members who are known or suspected to have harmed the child.

It is essential that carers do not criticise or condemn the child or others. Children who have been physically harmed may return to their families and the existing relationships and links need to be encouraged and maintained whilst investigations take place and decisions are made about a child's future.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse includes forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, including: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as

involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

If it is known that a child has been sexually abused, the child's Social Worker will make you aware of this history so that you can provide appropriate care and protection to a child. This information will be included in the child's Safe Care Plan. However, because it isn't always known/proven if a child has been abused before a placement, you **must** always follow 'safer caring' practice with all children you foster.

Foster carers may not know the full circumstances of the abuse and, therefore, cannot prepare themselves for the 'triggers' that will bring back memories or elicit a sexual response from the child. However, if an action elicits a response from a child that is unexpected or disproportionate, this should be treated sensitively, noted in the diary and discussed with the child Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker as a matter of urgency.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to meet basic physical, emotional or psychological needs which is likely to result in impairment of health or development.

Neglect will often be a feature in the lives of children who have been physically or sexually abused. However, a child may have been neglected without being subject to any other form of abuse.

Serious long term neglect of children may result in delayed development, health problems, learning difficulties, poor personal hygiene, limited socialisation, poor behaviour management etc.

As a foster carer, you will be made aware of the details of the neglect and how this has affected a child, so that you can provide the care and encouragement a child needs, to begin to reduce the impact of the neglect.

Babies and young children who have been neglected will often have delayed physical and emotional development. Careful medical attention and monitoring of weight and growth will often be needed. Foster carers will need to work closely with health staff in managing these.

However, as with other forms of abuse, the degree and details of the neglect a child has experienced may not be known at the point of placement.

Emotional / psychological abuse

Emotional / psychological abuse includes threats of harm or abandonment, coercive control, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks, witnessing abuse of others.

A child will always suffer emotional harm when subjected to the forms of abuse noted above. However, a child's emotional and behavioural development will be adversely

affected by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection without any other form of abuse.

This type of abuse will often lead to the child being developmentally delayed or failing to thrive. Behaviours may include wetting, soiling, self-harm, aggression, attention seeking. As a foster carer, it is important to understand the emotional harm a child has suffered so as to be able to provide the support needed with the behaviours.

Disclosure or suspicions of abuse

Once a child is settled in a foster placement, they may start to feel sufficiently safe and protected to give more information about the circumstances of their abuse to the foster carer. It may be that information is disclosed to a child of the foster family.

It is very important for carers to know how to react in these circumstances.

Do tell the child that you will have to pass the information on to their Social Worker.

How to Respond

As a carer, you are likely to often be in the position of hearing a disclosure of abuse. How you respond to that disclosure is very important. There are some general guidelines for dealing with disclosures:

1: LISTEN to what s/he is saying. Try not to interrupt him or her or ask lots of questions. Being asked a lot of questions can feel like being interrogated. It can also compromise any future investigation. Let him or her tell you at their own pace. Don't worry if s/he stops talking for a while - silences are O.K. You don't have to rush in to fill the gaps.

2: It is important that you let the child know that you BELIEVE them.

Individuals rarely make up stories about sexual abuse. It's also important to think about what you say. You will have been influenced, as we all have, by the many myths current in our society about sexual abuse so it's not helpful to say what may instinctively come into your head. **THINK FIRST** and make sure your response doesn't reinforce any of these myths.

3: CONTAIN your own feelings. It's important not to show shock or horror. This may reinforce a sense of shame.

4: ACKNOWLEDGE their trust in disclosing to you and highlight their courage and strength in taking positive action in their healing process.

5: Remember:

DO immediately tell the child you believe them.

DO tell the child that they were right to tell you and that they were very brave to do so.

DO use the child's language or vocabulary.

DO acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things.

DO tell the child that this has happened to other children and that they are not the only one.

DO tell them that they are not responsible for what happened and did not deserve it.

DO tell them that sometimes adults do things that are not OK (avoid saying that the offender is "sick").

DO everything you can to support, comfort and reassure the child.

DO ensure that the child feels safe following disclosure. You might need to stay physically close to give an extra sense of physical security - the offender may have used threats.

DON'T make promises you can't keep

DON'T panic or show that you are shocked. It is important to remain calm and in control of your feelings.

DON'T give the impression that you might blame the child. e.g. don't ask: "why did you let him?", "what were you doing there anyway?" or "why didn't you tell me before?"

DON'T ask intrusive questions. Listen but don't pry. Respect the child's need for privacy.

DON'T be over protective.

Remember, when a child discloses they are likely to feel:

Ashamed - Children often are ashamed about the abuse itself.

Confused - Children are often confused about their feelings for the perpetrator.

Scared - Children are often fearful of the repercussions of telling. They may be scared of the perpetrator, scared that the abuse may recur, or that the family will break up.

Guilty - Children often blame themselves for the abuse and often feel guilt for telling.

BE CAREFUL about touching (e.g. hugging or cuddling) the child if they have not initiated the contact. Some children may be upset by physical contact.

If a child discloses abuse you should inform the child's Social Worker immediately. If they are not available ask to speak to the Duty Officer, Team Manager or Supervising Social/Support Worker.

If it is out of hours - contact the emergency duty team.

Record exactly what the child said, keep it factual do not offer an opinion. It is ok to record the child's manner, and behaviour.

Contact

Contact for children in foster care is governed by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018.

The local Authority has a duty to promote contact for children in foster care in order to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships.

Many children who are looked after by the local authority return to the care of their birth or extended family. It is, therefore, crucial for the success of rehabilitation plans that positive and regular contact is maintained with family members throughout a child's placement in foster care. Such contact should aim to maintain attachments and help the child to develop their sense of identity and understand their lives and their sense of self.

Types of contact

Contact will normally consist of face-to-face contact and may take place in a contact Centre/family centre, the foster carers home, the parent's home or that of a family member or at a venue arranged by the child's social worker. Other forms of contact could include telephone calls, letters, cards, Skype, or video or audio-taped messages. Some children will need to be supported and encouraged by their foster carers to maintain this contact.

Contact Arrangements

Arrangements for contact will be discussed initially as part of the matching and preparation for placement. The plans, including the role of the foster carer in facilitating and promoting contact will be discussed and agreed and written into the Placement Agreement. Any changes to contact arrangements will be discussed with the foster carer and any changes to their involvement agreed. Foster carers are not able to make any changes to contact arrangements without prior agreement of the child social worker, nor must they discourage or prevent contact.

Under certain circumstances, contact is only permitted under supervision from Family Support Workers within the Prevention and Support Service. Foster carers will be asked to cooperate with arrangements (which are sometimes court directed) as far as possible taking into consideration other commitments to their own family.

Sometimes a child may return from time spent with parents in an upset or confused state. Carers need to understand that the child needs time to readjust or may need help in talking about their feelings. Try to prepare the child for contact. Including the birth family in celebrations such as birthdays can be helpful (where appropriate).

If a member of the family visits unexpectedly it is important to know what to do. The child's Social Worker should have described the child's legal status in their Care and Support Plan and been clear about any concerns/risks regarding any particular individual. Ensure you record such visits and inform the child's Social Worker and/or your Supervising Social/ Support Worker.

Some foster carers may be involved in helping children to move on to adoptive placements. This will involve having the adoptive family in your home at the beginning of introductions and providing them with information on routines, likes and dislikes and all other information on the child. You will be expected to provide them with an album containing photographs of the child's time with you to be included in their Life Journey work. Contact arrangements

should be reviewed regularly, the child's view sought and wherever possible given priority in determining contact arrangements.

Recording Contact Arrangements

Foster carers will be required to record the outcomes of contact and their perceived impact on the child within the Foster Carer Diary. It is the foster carers responsibility to transport the children they look after to contact. This provides the child with security and stability, in knowing that the foster carer will be a constant, particularly in cases where the parent's/family don't show-up for contact.

Maintaining links with friends

Although the emphasis on contact planning and arrangements tends to focus on family members, it is important that children in foster care are encouraged and supported in maintaining contact and links with friends, both old and new. Encouragement includes helping children to make telephone calls to friends, write letters, and send cards on birthdays. It is also important that fostered children are given 'permission' to invite friends to visit to spend time together or have a meal with the foster family.

As with any responsible parent, foster carers will form a view about the suitability of a child's friendship network. If a carer considers that a friend or group of friends are having a negative influence on a child, it is advisable to speak to the Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker for advice about how to best deal with this situation.

Listening and respecting children's views

The Social Care Department implements A Children's Rights Approach, which is a framework for working with children, grounded in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) to help public bodies integrate children's rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice.

The Fostering Service expects that foster carers will adopt a children's rights based approach. Foster carers are in a unique position in caring for children to be able to listen and act upon their views. Foster carers should seek to ascertain the child's views and opinions on a regular and frequent basis and where appropriate, act upon them.

Foster carers should record and pass on to the child's Social Worker the views and wishes of a child in relation to any care planning matters. This is a continuous process and should not be limited to work undertaken in preparation for the child's LAC review meetings.

You may need to request assistance in establishing the views of children who have communication difficulties due to age, disability or language. Please speak to the child's Social Worker for help with this.

Advocacy

The National Standards and Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Wales (2019) defines Advocacy as follows: "Advocacy is about: speaking up for children and young people, empowering children and young people to make sure their rights are

respected and their views, wishes and feelings are heard at all times, representing the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people to decision-makers, and helping them to navigate the system”.

The Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014, places a statutory duty on the Local Authority to provide advocacy services to some groups of children, specifically ‘looked after children’, ‘care leavers’, ‘children at risk’ and ‘children in need of care and support’.

TGP Cymru is commissioned by WCBC to provide an independent and confidential advocacy service for these groups of children in Wrexham. They can help with:

- Informing children / young people of their rights
- Sorting things out with workers/carers
- Providing support and help for children / young people to speak up at meetings
- Helping children who have become looked after understand what being looked after means and what LAC review meetings are and how they work
- Understanding what being on the Child Protection Register means and what Child Protection Conferences are and how they work
- How advocacy can help children and young people in LAC Review Meetings and Child Protection Conferences

For more information, please see the contact details below and / or refer to the information leaflets in the appendix.

Telephone: 01286 238 007

Freephone: 0800 111 6880

Email: NorthWalesAdvocacy@tgpcymru.org.uk

Address: Unit 3, Victoria Dock, Balaclava Road, Caernarfon, LL55 1TH

Independent Visitors

WCBC also commission TGP Cymru to provide an Independent Visitor Service for children and young people who are in care but who have no or very limited contact with their family.

For more information please contact TGP Cymru’s Independent Visitor Coordinator:

Telephone: 01286 238 007

Freephone: 0800 111 6880

Email: northwalesadvocacy@tgpcymru.org.uk

Overnight stays

Foster carers should be able to make decisions about the children and young people they foster, as if they were their own child, and act as a supportive parent would. Foster carers should consider overnight stays as part of the natural development of a child’s social skills. Foster carers should record their decision making within the child/young persons diary and notify the child’s Social Worker. There is a separate process for approving overnight stays

with birth family. All overnight stays with birth family need to be authorised by the Local Authority.

Foster carers considering a request from a child to stay overnight should base their decision on the following:

- Are there any relevant restrictions on overnight stays in the child's Care Plan, Foster Placement Agreement, or any Court Orders which restrict the child from making particular overnight stays?
- Are there any factors in the child's past experiences or behaviour which would preclude overnight stays?
- The age and level of understanding of the child concerned
- Are there any grounds for concern in relation to the household or activities concerned?
- Is the child staying in the household with another child or children of similar age, rather than staying with significantly older children or solely with an adult or adults?
- What is the purpose of the overnight stay?
- What is the length of the stay – for prolonged stay, permission should be sought from the child's Social Worker and the Service Manager in advance as DBS checks **may** be required.

If the foster carer has any doubts they must liaise with the Supervising Social Worker or Child Care Social Worker. The foster carer should keep a record of any enquiries made when considering an overnight stay. This record should be kept in the foster carers diary.

Foster carers must make all reasonable enquiries to satisfy themselves that good care will be provided for the child and to be clear about the following:

- Contact details (address and telephone number) for the household in which the child is staying.
- Ascertain who will be responsible for the child.
- Personally speak to the responsible adult (see definition) to satisfy themselves that they appear suitable as a temporary carer.
- Check that the sleeping arrangements for the child are known and appear safe.
- Have some indication of what the child or young person will be doing.
- Ensure that the responsible adult has the foster carer's contact details in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that any specific health needs will be met during the stay.

- Know when the child or young person is due to return home and that transport arrangements are in place to facilitate this, preferably for the foster carer to involve themselves in the transport.

Babysitting

Foster children may be included in your normal babysitting arrangements. The foster carer is expected to act as “good parent” in his/her own right and make an assessment of appropriateness based on discussions with the child and the person with whom it is proposed the child will be left.

There is no law in the UK stating how old a babysitter must be. The NSPCC recommends that they should be at least 16 years old.

The Social Care Department does not recommend leaving a looked after child in the care of birth children if they themselves are under the age of 18.

A looked after child must never be placed in the position of babysitting or caring for, or being cared for, by another looked after child.

The Social Care Department may suggest completing a disclosure and barring service check (DBS) on any adult members of your support network who will provide regular babysitting for the children in your care.

Where possible arrangements for babysitting should be included in the Foster Placement Agreement.

For children who have experienced abuse, foster carers will need to agree with their Supervising Social Worker and the child’s Social Worker satisfactory arrangements for the care of foster children when the carers wish to go out without them, such as reciprocal planned arrangements with other foster carers.

Any use of a babysitter should be recorded in the Foster Carer Diary.

Below are some things to consider when using a babysitter:

- If they are looking after more than one child or a child with complex needs, think about if they can handle this
- Ask them how they would deal with situations like your child refusing to go to bed
- Get them together with your child and see whether they hit it off well and afterwards ask your child how they feel about the sitter
- Ask the babysitter if they’ve looked after children often and whether they would mind you speaking to other people they sit for
- If you have any doubts at all about a possible babysitter it’s always best to find someone else

Leaving children unsupervised

There is no legal age at which children may be left home alone, but you can be prosecuted for neglect if it puts the child at risk of injury or suffering.

The NSPCC have issued guidance titled '[Is my child ready to be left alone?](#)'

The guidance can help you decide what's best for your child, prepare them for being home alone, and make sure they're safe.

The Social Care Department endorses the NSPCC advice:

- Never leave a baby or young child home alone, not even for a few minutes – whether they're sleeping or awake. Most accidents happen at home, and children under the age of five are most at risk of getting hurt.
- Even if your child is approaching 12 they may not be mature enough to cope with an emergency. If you do need to leave them, make sure it's only for a short time.
- If leaving an older child alone, make sure they're happy about the arrangement and know when and how to contact you and the emergency services.
- If your child is under 16 they shouldn't be left alone overnight.
- Teach your child what to do if there's ever a problem. Keep your mobile phone with you and make sure your child knows your number. Also leave a list of people you trust for them to go to or call, such as a neighbour or relative.

If you are planning to be away from home overnight, then you must advise your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker in advance so that appropriate alternative care for the child or young person can be arranged. This may include them having a sleepover at a friend's home, or with a member of your support network, but this must be agreed in advance to enable any appropriate checks to be carried out, and arrangements put in place in case of emergencies.

Missing from placement

Children and young people go missing from their foster homes for various reasons. The possibility of this happening may have been identified by the child's Social Worker at the beginning of placement and a risk assessment made as to how vulnerable the child may be in these situations.

Due to the nature of their circumstances and the reasons for them being looked after children living in foster homes can be considered to be particularly vulnerable in these situations.

When a child/young person absents him/herself without permission it is necessary to initiate procedures that encourage him/her to return as quickly and safely as possible and ensure that he/she is treated positively on return.

Unauthorised absences

Some children will absent themselves for a short period and then return to the foster home.

Any child/young person falling into this category should not be routinely reported to the Police. The category of 'unauthorised absent' will only be applicable for a maximum of six hours. Any absence exceeding that period, where the location/whereabouts of the young person are not known, will be categorised as missing.

In some situations much shorter periods than six hours will be appropriate – e.g. in the case of a very young child or if the risk assessment identifies that a quicker response is required. These children must be regarded as 'missing' not 'absent'.

Missing from Care

A child/young person is considered to be missing if he/she is absent from his/her place of residence without authority.

When the young person's location or reason for absence is unknown and there is cause for concern for them because of their vulnerability or there is potential danger for the public.

Any child who is unauthorised absent for more than six hours or past midnight must be regarded as missing and reported to the police as such.

What to do

Foster carers are expected to adhere to:
The All Wales Protocol – Missing Children (see appendix).
Policy 4.21 – Children Looked After who go Missing (see appendix)

Offending / Police Involvement

Some children who are placed in foster care will already have been involved with Youth Offending Teams. Foster carers will be provided with full information about the offending history of young people they care for so that they can understand the purpose and the form of involvement with Youth Offending Teams.

This information will be provided to foster carers before a placement and details of the role of the Youth Offending Teams clearly detailed in the Placement Information Record.

When a child commits an offence

If the police make foster carers aware that a child or young person has come to their attention it is vital that the foster carer informs the child's Social Worker and Youth Offending Team.

If the police want to interview a young person an 'appropriate adult' must be present. Depending upon circumstances it may be a parent, Social Worker or Youth Offending Worker who is trained in police procedures.

Foster carers should contact the young person's Social Worker (or Emergency Duty Team if out of hours).

It is essential that a child is made fully aware of their rights to legal advice and representation.

Offending in the foster home

There may be occasions when a child in placement steals from the foster carer or damages property or the home. However, involving the police at an early stage could have undesirable consequences for a child such as acquiring a criminal record that could influence prospects of employment and family relationships, the imposition of bail conditions that may mean moving the child from the placement or permanently damaging the relationship with the foster family.

In most situations, foster carers should contact the child's Social Worker, Emergency Duty Team and / or their Supervising Social Worker for advice.

Involving the Police

There may be situations when police involvement is necessary to protect children, carers, the community or property. In these situations prior discussions with Children's Services will not be required.

Any decision to involve the police must consider the circumstances of the individual young person, their offending history, background, age and legal status.

Parental Demands to Remove a Child

There may be rare occasions when a parent demands to remove a child from a foster carer's care.

If the child is 'voluntarily accommodated' or 'accommodated under Section 76' of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, parents (or someone with parental responsibility) have a legal right to remove their child from the foster carer at any time.

If the child is the subject of:

- Interim Care Order (Section 38 of the Children Act 1989), or
- Care Order (Section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or
- Emergency Protection Order (EPO), or
- Police Protection Order (PPO)

Parents may not remove the child without the agreement of Children's Services.

In the first instance foster carers should refuse to hand over a child to a parent until they have sought the advice of the child's Social Worker, Duty Social Worker or the Emergency Duty Team. You will be advised about what course of action you should take.

In the case of children who are voluntarily accommodated, foster carers could ask parents for their co-operation in ending a placement in a planned way to minimise distress to the child, or ask parents if they can wait, while the carer speaks with the child's Social Worker. Foster carers must immediately inform the child's Social Worker or Duty Social Worker (or the Emergency Duty Team) when a child is removed in an unplanned way.

If a carer had serious concerns due to a parent's mood or their current ability to care for a child, it would be essential to inform the Social Worker or Emergency Duty Team without delay and to try and persuade the parent to wait and speak to the Social Worker.

In serious circumstances, where a child or other person may be in danger, it would be appropriate to telephone the police for immediate assistance.

Ending of Placements

A placement may end for a variety of reasons. The child may be returning to their parents or to another member of their family. They may move to another foster placement or to an adoptive home. They may have reached an age where they are 'leaving care' at which they choose to live independently, or are going to university.

Foster carers have an important part to play in helping the child with placement endings.

Foster carers need to be positive and encouraging of the move (whether they agree with it or not). They must support the child in explaining the reasons for the move and make constructive contact with the adults who will be taking over the care of the child. This could include information about the daily routines of the child, likes and dislikes and any other information that will help the child and their carers adjust to the move.

Under no circumstances should a child move with their belongings in plastic bags. Each child should be provided with boxes / suitcases, which will be supplied by the Fostering Service. Sometimes, adoptive parents may wish to purchase a new bag (suitcase / holdall) for the child, otherwise the foster carer should use the boxes / suitcases provided by the Fostering Service.

The needs, wishes and feelings of the child are paramount. The most important person to consider at these times is the child.

The Fostering Service will support foster carers to maintain links with children who leave their care, whenever this is appropriate.

Unplanned endings and Disruption meetings

Sometimes placements end because foster carers no longer feel able to care for the child. There are many possible reasons for this. It is important that whatever the reasons and circumstances, the move is made as positively for the child as possible.

When placements end in an unplanned manner it is important that a disruption meeting is held. The purpose of the meeting is to identify the factors which led to the breakdown of the placement, learn from the experience and enable more appropriate planning for the future. It is important that where possible the foster carer attends the disruption meeting as they hold valuable information which could prevent future disruptions.

Where a foster carer wishes a placement to end, they need to discuss this with their Supervising Social Worker in the first instance and agree when the placement may end.

Section 6 – Health and Safety

Health and safety in the home

As an approved foster carer for WCBC, an annual Health and Safety Risk Assessment will be carried out by your Supervising Social Worker as part of your annual review.

Fire Safety

When children are new to a placement they are unfamiliar with the property and might not be aware of potential hazards. For avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm, you must use suitable equipment such as stair gates / fireguards, appropriate to the child's age and development.

All children should be made aware of which exits they might use should there be an incident such as fire in the home. Fire can start very easily and can spread with frightening speed.

The foster home should have smoke alarms, one on each floor of the house (e.g. hallway or landing) and any other area used as an escape route. You must make sure that all alarms are checked weekly and batteries changed as needed.

Upon approval North Wales Fire and Rescue Service will be requested to visit your home to undertake a home fire safety check and you may request of your own at any time.

A member of the fire service will visit your home and provide:

- Fire safety hints and tips.
- Help you to put together an appropriate fire escape plan.
- Ensure smoke alarms are fitted correctly / fit new alarms if needed.

To request a free 'safe and well' check from North Wales Fire Service contact 0800 169 1234 or visit the website to complete the online form: <https://www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk/keeping-you-safe/at-home/free-smoke-alarm/>

Carbon monoxide (CO)

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless gas which is highly poisonous.

A common misconception is that gas is the only thing that creates carbon monoxide. However, anything that burns such as wood, oil, coal, mains/bottled gas, biomass pellets, peat and charcoal creates CO. Therefore, even an open coal fire or a wood burner in the home poses a risk.

Please remember when you are on holiday, having a day out or on a boat, portable barbeques, stoves, heaters and generators can all produce CO.

- **Gas maintenance** – a Gas Safe engineer must assess all gas appliances and ensure their safety.
- **Log burners** – must be installed by an appropriately qualified person, who will issue a HETAS Certificate of Compliance to certify it is safe.
- **Open fires** – chimneys and flues need to be in good condition and also need to be swept once a year.
- **Carbon monoxide detectors** – must be installed correctly and in the right in the right place.

Further Information

- The RoSPA website (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) offers a wealth of information including carbon monoxide and gas safety: <http://www.rospa.com/home-safety/advice/>
- Carbon Monoxide Awareness, a registered charity, for further information on carbon monoxide: <http://covictim.org/>
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – Carbon Monoxide: <http://www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk/keeping-you-safe/at-home/carbon-monoxide.aspx?lang=en>

Gardens and Outside areas

Foster carers need to make themselves aware of any hazards in their own garden, and in the gardens of friends and neighbours that the child may visit.

Garden fences and gates must be in good condition and secure. Any areas of the garden with drops must be securely fenced or railed. Greenhouses and cold frames must be fenced off.

Swings and slides must be securely fixed, in good condition and cleaned regularly. Sandpits must be covered when not in use. Areas of the garden where children play must be kept free from animal litter. Children and adults can catch a variety of serious illnesses such as toxoplasmosis from cats and salmonella from chickens.

Water Features / Ponds

Water holds a fascination for young children. Whether the water is held in a garden pond, a rainwater butt, a paddling pool or a bucket, a young child will invariably investigate. It is impossible for any parent / carer to supervise a toddler one hundred percent of the time so it is essential that steps be taken to reduce the risk of drowning within the garden where the child will play (ROSPA, 2015).

For further information on garden water features, please visit RoSPA's website:

<https://www.rospa.com/leisure-safety/water/advice/pond-garden-water/>

Poisonous Plants

Foster carers should be aware that some of the plants in their garden and home are potentially harmful. It is your responsibility to ensure there are no toxic or harmful plants in the areas of your garden that are accessible to children.

Foster Carers are responsible for ensuring, as far as possible, that children in their care are not exposed to risks. This includes risks from hazardous plants, bulbs, shrubs, trees and fungi. Foster carers should be advised that many common plants in the garden and the countryside could be poisonous. They can cause discomfort and illness, rashes and scratches and some can be highly dangerous. Children may think they are eating food (for example berries).

Foster carers should be advised to consider avoiding having dangerous plants in parts of their garden that children can easily access and to always check for dangers when buying new plants.

Foster carers must always seek immediate medical help if they think a child has ingested any part of a hazardous plant.

More information regarding poisonous plants can be found at:
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=524>

Social Media and Staying Safe Online

Home Internet / Mobile Phone Use

Foster carers should be responsible for making decisions regarding the possession and use of mobile phones, as they would do for their own children. They should receive clear guidance and agreement from the Child Care Social Worker in consultation with the Supervising Social Worker regarding the young people's use of mobile phones and internet. Any particular restrictions, including internet access should be specified at the time of placement or if concerns arise at a later stage.

The foster carers should make themselves aware of the children's school's policies and comply with these at all times.

Every foster carer should set up appropriate parental controls on the family's and the child/young person's computer, mobile phone and games consoles. Filters on computers and mobiles can prevent the child/young person from viewing inappropriate and any possible illegal content that could place themselves at risk. The foster carer can activate and change levels dependent on the age and ability of the child/young person.

If a foster carer is concerned about bullying, inappropriate contact or something on the internet which is illegal contact they must contact the service provider and contact the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre and discuss it with the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker.

Foster carers should be aware of confidentiality issues around social media. Discussions relating to matters about the child you foster and his/her family should not be discussed with any persons other than those professionals involved in the case or parents or persons with parental responsibility for the child. This confidentiality also applies on the internet and when using social media. Please refer to the 'Confidentiality for foster carers' section of the handbook for more information.

Training is available to foster carers via the Fostering Network and the Fostering Service. For more information on this training, please contact your Supervising Social Worker.

The following information has been taken from the 'Looked after children - Specific risks' section of www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/, run by CEOP.

Contact – Online Safety

In online spaces such as social networking sites, direct contact with birth parents or acquaintances or other (unknown) adults can be difficult to manage.

Social networking sites such as Facebook or Instagram, give you the option to communicate by searching for 'friends', share personal information and photographs.

Communicating with real friends you know and trust online can be a fun harmless to most, but in the case of vulnerable children, there are potential added risks.

- They can be contacted by birth parents or family members who may have restricted contact
- They can be contacted by strangers

Remember....if this contact is not allowed in the real world, it should not take place online.

As we know children can be curious, so think about the possibility of your child actively searching for their birth parents or friends they have lost contact with. These people may not have their best interests at heart and your child may need to be gently reminded of this. Talk to them about why it might not be such a good idea.

What can you do?

- Sit with the child and explain the risks of 'friending' people online, this includes people they have never met in the real world, but also people from their past. Explain that rules that apply in the real world, also apply in the online world and that they are only there to keep them safe
- Ensure their privacy settings in online spaces are set to private, so only people they know and trust can see information about them
- Ask them to tell you if someone contacts them online who is not meant to (like their birth family), ask them not to respond or accept them as a friend
- Inform them that they will not get into trouble and that you can help
- If you are aware of any inappropriate contact from family members or others it is your duty to report the incident to your child's Social Worker

Security

Social media has given us the ability to share information at the click of a button. Children (and adults) share photos, wall posts and even their current location, through their mobile phones and other internet based technologies.

Any child sharing too much personal information could be putting themselves at risk, however, in the case of 'looked after' children these risks are multiplied.

Personal information can be manipulated and used against them due to the nature of their personal circumstances. It could be that someone from their past is looking to locate them, find out where they live or go to school. To eliminate this risk, ask the child to not share personal information online, such as;

- Real world locations [link to location] like their home or where they go to school
- Photos of them in their school uniform or a location which would be recognisable
- 'Friend' people they don't know or trust in the real world
- Indecent photographs of themselves or others (as this might constitute a criminal offence).
- Coercion to share photographs

Challenges

Your child may have come from a home where their online safety has not been monitored. It may come as a shock to them when you attempt to implement new settings, security and advice on the technologies and sites they use.

They may feel that this is an invasion of their privacy, that they own these technologies and that you have no right to touch them.

To overcome these challenges, think about;

- Sitting with your child and discussing the reasons for implementing a 'house agreement' – explain that their safety is your main concern and that you know how easy it is to get into difficult situations online. Show them a Thinkuknow (CEOP) resource (<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>) - you can choose from those aimed at 5-7 year olds, 8-10 year olds, 11-13 year olds or young people aged 14+ - to reinforce these messages
- Take it one step at a time, give them the opportunity to become accustomed to any changes before moving onto the next
- Implement safety guidelines across the whole family, do not be seen to be singling them out

Bullying and risk taking behaviour

Children who are deemed to be 'different' in some way are often a target for bullies. It may be known that the child is looked after and this can make them stand out both online and offline.

If you are aware that your child is being bullied in the real world, think about how this bullying could be manifesting online. This is called cyberbullying and takes place either via text message or online.

If your child is being bullied there are some simple steps you can take to protect them. Visit bulliesout.com and bullying.co.uk/advice-for-young-people/ for some great information and support for children who are being bullied.

As a parent or carer it is sometimes difficult to comprehend that your child could be the bully.

The children in your care may be a victim or perpetrator of bullying. Due to some of their passed lived experiences it could be that they are acting out these emotions in the online world or are more vulnerable to bullying, through the games they play or through their interaction with others.

If you are worried about your child's behaviour online, talk to your child's Social Worker.

Section 7 – Health and Development

The Fostering Service ensures that children in foster care receive health care, which meets his or her needs for physical, emotional and social development.

The Fostering Service is informed about health services, including specialist services, available in the area it covers and takes these into account when matching foster carers and children. The Fostering Service thus ensures that no placement is made which prevents a child or young person from continuing to receive the specialist health care services they need.

Each child or young person should have a Personal Health Plan within 4 weeks of becoming looked after. The plan should be reviewed as part of the statutory care review process.

Roles and Responsibilities

Foster Carer

- Ensuring each child or young person in a foster placement is an active, informed participant of various leisure activities
- Registering a child or young person with a doctor or dentist when necessary (Specialist Nurse in the Social Services Looked After Children team can assist with this)
- Taking the child or young person to any health appointments, including dental and optician appointments when required
- Helping the child or young person to access the services that she/he needs, e.g. diet, personal hygiene, health promotion issues etc.
- Acting as an advocate on the child's behalf
- Supply information about the child's health needs for the planning and review process
- Recording any medical treatment/ medication received by the child or young person on the Medication Record Form.
- Providing a range of food to ensure a balanced and healthy diet
- Helping children and young people manage relationships

It is important that you, the foster carer, play an active role in helping children and young people to understand their own responsibilities and contributions towards healthy living.

Social Worker

The Social Worker must promote the child's best interest and wellbeing and should take an active interest in their health. They should do their best to ensure that the Looked after Child's identified health needs are met.

Fostering Service

The Fostering Service will work closely with the Childcare Social Worker and foster carer and in particular the foster carer to ensure that they can confidently fulfil their role in promoting the health and development of the child or young person in their care.

In working closely the Fostering Service will:

- Provide relevant and up to date information /training to you about the child or young person's health needs and how they could be met
- Maintain good links with health needs and how they could be met for the child or young person when necessary.

Specialist Nurse

The Specialist Nurse for Looked After Children who works in the Looked After Children Team works closely with children or young people, Social Workers, carers and other relevant professionals in promoting the health and development of Looked After Children.

The Specialist Nurse can be contacted if you have any concerns about the health of a child or young person with a GP or dentist.

The Children's Social Care Department, through the Specialist Nurse in the Looked After Children team, will ensure that arrangements are made for a child to be provided with health care services, including immunisations, medical and dental care and treatment. However, it will be your responsibility to ensure that the child or young person attends appointments.

Consent for medical procedures

Please consult Policy 5.15 'Delegated Authority to Foster Carers' for more information on consent and authority for consent.

The issue of non-routine medical treatment is complex. Signing for surgical procedures is something that many foster carers do not want to do and yet to bring "strangers" to a bedside may be distressing.

Where there is a planned medical procedure the Social Worker should ensure all consents and information to guide consent is provided to the signatory. Foster carers will need to assess risks in relation to emergency medical treatment and give consent where necessary, for example in the case of an accident resulting in a fracture, a delay in obtaining consent may not be in the child or young person's best interests. Carers need to be aware of the implications of the Gillick Principle & the Fraser Guidelines in relation to a young person's giving their own consent to medical treatment.

The question of consent to more invasive procedures should be discussed on a case by case basis as some children/ young people may have longstanding medical conditions which require frequent medical intervention. In many circumstances the procedures requiring a general anaesthetic will be planned and will therefore allow for prior discussion and agreement with the responsible Head of Service.

Assessments/Medical

Children's Services will ensure that each looked after child or young person receives a health examination/medical and written health assessment of the child's health and her/his need for health care.

To avoid delay, arrangements for health assessments must be made prior to placement and no later than 14 working days after the placement date, unless an assessment has been carried out within the last 3 months.

If the child remains in Local Authority care regular health assessments will occur dependent on the age of the child – as follows:

Under 5 years – health assessment every 6 months

Over 5 years – health assessment every 12 months

Health assessments continue until the child is 18. However, the child has the right to decline a health assessment, particularly for children aged 16-18.

Health information to be provided to you

Before the placement commences you should have been provided with as full a description as possible of the health needs of a child or young person being placed with you. If you have not yet received this information it may be because information was not available

before the placement – please contact your Supervising Social Worker or the children or young person’s Social Worker who will inform/ provide you with such details.

You will also be provided with a written health record for each child or young person placed in your care; this is updated during the placement and moves with the child.

Depending upon the age and understanding, the child should have access to and understand the health record maintained by the Local Authority.

Issues effecting child/young person’s health and development

Physical Health

Alcohol

Young people will be discouraged from drinking alcohol. They should be given information regarding the influence and harmful effects that can arise from consuming alcohol. For example: <http://www.talktofrank.com/drug/alcohol>

It should not be possible for children to gain easy access to alcohol.

Drugs / substance misuse

All children and young people need to be informed of the risk and consequences of using drugs. Whilst they may receive information at school they will still need your support, advice and guidance. You should consider the following when providing support and guidance to a child or young person:

- Your level of knowledge / information / training received about drugs, alcohol, smoking and other substances
- Your own experience, values and attitude towards substances and the effects of misuse
- Establish what level of knowledge and information the child has received about substance misuse (from school / social worker / youth justice / other agencies), remembering to take into account his/her age, needs and the effects of peer pressure.

Should a foster carer discover that a young person has substances in the foster home e.g. illegal drugs, ‘legal highs’ or prescription drugs, advice should be sought from the Supervising Social Worker immediately.

What to look for?

The following may be indicators of substance misuse and you should notify the Childcare Social worker and the Fostering Service should you have any concerns:

- Sudden mood swings
- Unusual irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Excessive drowsiness
- Evidence of lies and furtive behaviour
- Unexplained reduction or increase of money and/ or personal property
- Unusual smell, stains, marks on clothing within the home, or on the child.
- Paraphernalia associated with drug use found on the child's clothing / in child's room e.g. foil, pestle, scales, bongs

If you find yourself having to deal with a drug related issue, discuss with your Supervising Social Worker and/ or the child's Social Worker where to get appropriate information and the strategies you could use to tackle the issue.

Smoking

Nicotine is highly addictive. Some looked after children may have been allowed to smoke or did not have their smoking habit curtailed by their parent(s) before they became looked after.

No looked after child who is fostered will be supplied by their foster carers with cigarettes or any other forms of tobacco. In England and Wales it is an offence for an adult to buy cigarettes for anyone under 18; it is also an offence to sell e-cigarettes to children under 18.

It is expected that foster carers will encourage children who smoke to spend pocket money and other personal monies on other age appropriate items and / or activities.

Eating Disorders

Children and young people may have different eating habits and routines which does not necessarily mean that there is a problem.

There are many factors which can contribute to a child or young person developing an eating disorder and it is important that he/she is supported and guided through this time and that avenues of support are accessed. If you have concerns for your fostered child or young person speak to your Supervising Social Worker and/ or the Childcare Social Worker to discuss what steps can be taken to help the child or young person.

There are a number of identified eating disorders. The following definitions are provided by the NHS:

Anorexia Nervosa

People who have anorexia try to keep their weight as low as possible by not eating enough food or exercising too much, or both. This can make them very ill because they start to starve. They often have a distorted image of their bodies, thinking they are fat even when they are underweight.

It is a condition that affects both genders but is more common in teenage girls.

Bulimia

People who have bulimia go through periods where they eat a lot of food in a very short amount of time (binge eating) and then make themselves sick, use laxatives (medication to help them empty their bowels) or do excessive exercise, or a combination of these, to try to stop themselves gaining weight.

It is a condition that affects both genders but is more common in teenage girls.

Compulsive Eating Disorder / Binge Eating Disorder

Binge eating disorder involves regularly eating large portions of food all at once until the person feels uncomfortably full, and then often upset or guilty.

Binges are often planned in advance and the person may buy "special" binge foods.

It is a condition that affects both genders and usually starts in later teenage years.

Indicators of Eating Disorders

- Regular missing of meals
- Excessive calorie counting
- Sudden interest in preparing meals (to disguise own eating habits)
- Wearing loose clothes to disguise the body
- Obsessive exercising
- Excessive and dramatic weight loss or weight gain
- Food going missing from the kitchen
- Disappearing after meals

Emotional Health

Whilst the majority of young people will lead emotionally healthy lives it is important to be aware that their experiences of becoming looked after (the reasons and the process) may lead to them being less able to cope with life's ups and downs.

A lot of emotional upheaval may eventually settle with time but there are a number of things you can do to help the young person to come to terms with events and lead emotionally healthy lives:

- By being honest and consistent and developing trust
- Accepting the young person as a person even if you disapprove of the behaviour
- Accepting the importance of friendship even if you disapprove of the friends
- Respecting their individuality
- Listening to the young person and giving time and attention
- Understanding what is causing their behaviour - good and bad
- Giving feedback sensitively and bringing problems out into the open

- Building on their strengths and interest

Bed Wetting

A child who has suffered a traumatic experience, which may include being abused or being moved away from natural parents, might begin to wet the bed. Be patient, make the child feel as safe and secure as you can and do not punish him/her as this simply adds to the child's distress.

Discuss the problem with the child's Social Worker to identify strategies to manage and respond to the situation. Bed-wetting may be an indicator of another problem. An extra allowance may be available to assist with laundry costs.

Mental Health

Most children become looked after as a result of abuse and neglect. Although they have many of the same health issues as their peers, the extent of these is often greater because of their past experiences. For example, almost half of children in care have a diagnosable mental health disorder and two-thirds have special educational needs. Delays in identifying and meeting their emotional well-being and mental health needs can have far reaching effects on all aspects of their lives, including their chances of reaching their potential and leading happy and healthy lives as adults.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Each area has its own Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The teams are multi-disciplinary in nature and include staff from Psychiatry, Psychology, Nursing, Social Work and various therapeutic backgrounds. CAMHS workers are available to work with children and young people who have identified emotional, behavioural and social problems. There are designated workers for looked after children.

If you have concerns about a child that you are looking after, a consultation meeting may be arranged, first between CAMHS and the child's allocated social worker, then between yourself and CAMHS. They will help you to understand the needs of children with different backgrounds and may be able to offer advice on how to manage their behaviour. If you feel that this is a service that may benefit you or the children you are looking after, please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker.

Self-harm

Self-harm happens when children / young people injure or harm themselves on purpose. They can overdose; hit, cut or burn themselves; pull their hair or pick their skin, take too many drugs or drink too much alcohol. Such actions may be a sign that something is seriously wrong. It might be the only way that they can cope with something that has happened or is happening now.

A young person may self-harm for many reasons. S/he may see it as a way of coping and, for a time, feeling better by:

- Releasing tension and feelings that have got bottled up inside and hurt so much as to become unbearable (these feelings may stem from current difficulties in life, such as stress of exams, a break up with a girl / boyfriend, racial harassment or confusion about sexual identity, or may be a response to past painful experiences such as physical or sexual abuse).
- Making oneself unattractive in their body so keeping others at bay.
- Gaining some control which is particularly so for a child / young person who have been abused and were powerless.
- Punishing themselves so atoning for feelings of being bad or guilty.
- Seeking help by demonstrating their distress.
- Comforting themselves – not just the release of tension but also having something 'special' one can do for oneself which may also gain attention and care from others.

You must inform the child's social worker and your supervising social worker at the first opportunity if an incident of self-harming occurs. This must also be clearly recorded in your diary notes.

Sexual Health

As well as looking after their physical and emotional health, young people should also be encouraged to look after their sexual health. Sexual health includes factors such as self-esteem, sexual identity, sexually transmitted infections, relationships and contraception.

There are a number of ways in which you can help a young person to look after their sexual health which includes:

- Acknowledging his/her right to receive sound, age-appropriate information
- Giving him/her opportunities to discuss their worries about personal relationships
- Protecting him/her from harmful situations yet allowing them to learn themselves
- Sex education
- Encouraging access to further information e.g. Wrexham Infoshop
- Ensuring the legal framework and consequences of sexual relationships are explained, where age appropriate (e.g. legal age of consent; sexting: sending / receiving indecent images of self / other minors)

Sex Education

Sex education is about how the body works, how it changes and what we do with our bodies and why. Whilst a young person may have had some input from school or other agencies, some children may have missed school and may have no understanding at all.

Your fostered child / young person may approach you with questions related to sexuality and sexual behaviour. It is important that you:

- Give them encouragement to discuss the topic with you
- Discuss with the child's Social Worker and/ or your Supervising Social Worker if something the young person says worries you
- Try to be honest with the young person about the topic and any concerns that arise

Sexuality

Nobody expects a carer to be an expert in discussing sexuality with a young person in their care - but it may help to seek advice and information from the Wrexham Family Information Service or Wrexham Infoshop.

The important things to remember are:

- To be honest and open with the young person
- To answer questions as best you can - be honest if you don't know the answer

Sexual Behaviour and Consent

It is important to understand that the law recognises that a young person over 16 with mental capacity has a right to consent to sex and to receive help with contraception without the consent of a person with parental responsibility.

A young person who is under the age of 16 but who is deemed to be of sufficient age and understanding may receive contraceptive advice and help without the consent of a person with parental responsibility. Underage sexual activity should always be seen as a possible indicator of child sexual exploitation.

Where appropriate and possible, take the opportunity to discuss with the young person if they really want to be in a relationship and want to have sex. It is always important to encourage them to use a clinic, health centre or other service that can provide sexual health advice and contraceptives e.g. Wrexham Infoshop.

Wrexham Infoshop is available for young people to use to access free and confidential information and advice on many issues.

Termination of Pregnancy

Please refer to 'Policy 4.12 – Termination of Pregnancy' for guidance on looked after children under the age of 18 who are pregnant and are considering a termination.

Section 8 – Education

There is strong evidence and research base that has shown that children who are looked after are more likely to have poor educational achievements, lower attendance rates and higher exclusion rates than their peers.

The reasons for this are many and varied but could include unstable home circumstances, lack of parental support etc. However, for some children and young people, school has provided the only stable point in their lives, and so it is considered important after placement with a foster carer that they continue to attend the same school, even though it might not be the nearest school to the foster carer's home.

Wrexham Fostering Service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

The Wrexham Fostering Service also gives high priority to helping you to meet a child's educational needs.

Personal Education Plans (PEP)

The Personal Education Plan is a key tool to ensure that everyone - education department, school staff, foster carers, social workers and family work together to ensure that the looked after child receives all the help and support he or she needs to do well in school.

The child's Social Worker should ensure that the PEP is completed, and is distributed to the LAC Education Coordinator, foster carer and all other relevant people. The PEP is then brought to the first statutory Care Plan Review that is held within 28 days of the child or young person entering care.

As a foster carer you have a key role in contributing to the writing, review and delivery of the PEP. The PEP is a requirement for all children in care and its effectiveness, is monitored by the Welsh Government as well as those involved at a local level. The PEP should be agreed and completed within 28 school days of the child or young person becoming Looked After, and reviewed every six months whenever there is a change in provision at school.

Roles and Responsibilities

While a child is looked after there are a number of people who have a key role in ensuring that the child or young person reaches their full potential. They include:

Foster Carers

Communicating with school

The carer must make contact with the school at the earliest opportunity and keep in touch. They can do this by:

- Getting to know the child's classroom assistant, teacher(s) and the LAC Designated Teacher at the school

- Giving the school contact details for the specific carer with whom they can liaise
- Keeping schools informed of changes, problems or a contact that may have taken place or may be approaching and the child is unsettled as a consequence
- Supporting the child in expressing his/her concerns and aspirations
- Contacting the school on the child's behalf when appropriate.

Ensuring school attendance

The carer should establish a clear expectation of school attendance and punctuality by:

- Ensuring that the child is awake at a reasonable time and providing breakfast
- Where necessary, taking the young person to school
- Providing all the equipment necessary for the young person to participate fully in the life of the school
- Liaising and working with professionals who may be working with your child such as the ESW and members of the LAC Education team.
- Ensuring that deliberate non-attendance is not rewarded in any way i.e. no television etc. when the child should be in school

Creating a positive home learning environment

It is very important that Looked after Children experience a home environment where learning is valued and respected. The carer should explore any opportunities for cultural resources, and at least provide:

- Time for study
- A quiet area to do homework
- Books and other reading material
- Learning opportunities outside the home, such as museum visits etc.
- Interest, conversation and a positive attitude about all aspects of learning

Taking a positive interest

Carers need to be involved and take an interest in the life of the child's school. They should:

- Support school policies, such as those relating to discipline and uniform
- Take an interest in the young person's daily activities at school
- Complete any homework diaries or reading records
- Support homework, by reading with a child, offering advice and ensure work is completed
- Attend parents' evenings and other school events
- Participate in the Personal Education Planning (PEP) Meeting

Child's Life Story Work

Copies of the school reports and achievement awards should be kept by the foster carers as part of the 'child's memory' and should be included in the life story work undertaken. These should move with the child if they change placement.

Social Worker

It is the Social Worker's responsibility to inform the school that the young person has become 'looked after', thus initiating the Person Education Planning meeting.

The child's Social Worker must promote the child's best interests and welfare and should take an active interest in their education. They should also do their best to ensure that the Looked After Child's needs are identified and promoted at school.

Education Social Worker

Education Social Workers should take an active role in promoting the educational interests of looked after children. They can ensure that good communication is maintained between schools, the education department, social workers, carers, the child and family.

Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher is the main person at school who is identified in the child's Personal Education Plan and Care Plan to act as an advocate and provide support for the looked after child.

The Designated Teacher is the main person at school whom Children's Services, carers and any other involved agencies or professionals will contact to discuss issues regarding an individual looked after child's education. They are also responsible for ensuring:

- That the school shares and supports high expectations for them,
- That educational information is transferred speedily between agencies and individuals
- That every Looked After Child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP), that is reviewed at least every six months
- That a Home-School agreement is drawn up with the primary carer.

Fostering Service

The Fostering Service will work closely with the people listed above and in particular the foster carer to ensure that they can confidently fulfil their role in promoting educational achievement.

Education Co-ordinator

The Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children is attached to the Children's Services 'Looked After Children Team'. The Education Co-ordinator manages a small team which includes a number of classroom assistants. The team works closely with children and young people, teachers, social workers, carers, schools and other relevant professionals to raise the attainment of looked after children.

Further Education

Post-16 or 'further' education encompasses various kinds of education and training suitable for people who are over compulsory school age, including vocational education and

training, work based training and foundation level degrees. The primary focus is on those aged 16 to 18 but anyone over compulsory school age may participate in further education.

Further Education programmes are mainly taught in FE colleges, work-based and adult community learning environments.

For further information, including careers advice please visit the [Careers Wales](#) website. Careers Wales can help young people with planning their career, preparing to get a job, and finding and applying for the right apprenticeships, courses and training.

Section 9 - Preparing for Adulthood and Independent Living

Preparation for independence

Preparation for adulthood should begin at an early age with the encouragement of self-management and self-care in children. It is important for all foster carers to recognise that preparation for independence is not just for foster carers who care for older children and young people. Foster carers are expected to promote self-care skills in children of all ages. This includes dressing, feeding, personal hygiene and personal safety. Foster carers are also expected to ensure that older children and young people are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves and their behaviour.

Pathway Planning

The role the foster carer will play in the development of independence and preparation for adulthood will be discussed and agreed within the Care and Support Plan.

For looked after children transitioning to adulthood, a Pathway Plan must be developed by the Local Authority. A Pathway Plan is the plan to promote the successful transition of the child to independence and social inclusion. The Pathway Plan will build on the Care and Support Plan and should detail those issues relevant to their future life when they leave care. The Pathway Plan must include:-

- Physical and Mental Health & Well-being
- Education, Training and Employment
- Promoting Positive Relationships
- Financial Capabilities and Money Management
- Accommodation pre/post 18 (include tenancy related support needs)
- Personal support; i.e. identity, social presentation, accessing public services
- Practical and other skills to encourage independence
- The name of the Personal Advisor
- Other relevant issues
- Contingency Plans

Young people must be central to the development of their Pathway Plan. The young person should be offered support / advocacy if needed to help them participate fully in the development and review of their Pathway Plan.

The Pathway Plan should respond to the changing needs of the young person and should be amended accordingly. The Pathway Plan should be thought of as a 'live document'.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out timescales for completing the Pathway Plan. For more information, please see 'Policy 4.36 – Pathway Planning'.

Personal Adviser

Once a young person ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver (whether this happens before they reach 18, or when they reach legal adulthood at age 18), the Local Authority are no longer required to provide them with a Social Worker to plan and co-ordinate their care and support.

The Local Authority **must** appoint a Personal Adviser (PA) to support the young person. The PA will act as the focal point to ensure that care leavers are provided with the right kind of personal support. The young person will be allocated a Personal Adviser at 15 years and 9 months.

The Social Worker will remain the key professional responsible for coordinating the care and support of the young person and implementation of the Pathway Plan until the child reaches 18. After the young person's 18th Birthday, it is the responsibility of the Personal Adviser.

After the age of 18, the Personal Advisor will hold a vital role (where applicable) in the assessment, preparation, implementation and review of the young person's Pathway Plan. They will co-ordinate the provision of services and take reasonable steps so that care leavers make use of services and will keep informed about care leavers' progress and wellbeing.

Accommodation – Care Leavers

Young people have several options to consider about where they are going to live following their 18th birthday:

- Move into their own accommodation
- Move into supported accommodation
- Live in University accommodation
- Remain with Foster Carers

'When I am Ready'

The Local Authority recognise that many young people in care experience delayed maturity and that their 18th birthday may not be the most appropriate time for them to move on from foster Care.

A 'When I am Ready' arrangement is one where the young person remains with their former foster carers after their 18th birthday. The arrangement helps to promote a gradual transition, in a family setting for young people, from a stable foster placement into adulthood and independent living.

The option of a 'WIR' arrangement should be explored as early as 15.9 years of age, as part of the Pathway Planning. Early discussion with the young person's foster carer will take place, as the agreement of the foster carer is essential before any more detailed

planning can begin. Final agreement needs to be in place by the time the young person reaches 17 ½ years of age.

A 'When I am Ready' policy has been established across all North Wales Local Authorities, setting out:

- The criteria required to extend a foster care placement beyond a young person's eighteenth birthday into a "When I am Ready" arrangement;
- The financial requirements and benefit issues for young people;
- The financial rates and payment implications for foster carers and "When I am Ready" carers;
- The welfare benefit issues for foster carers and "When I am Ready" carers;
- The Income Tax and National Insurance implications and issues for foster carers and "When I am Ready" carers.
- The social care requirements and practical issues associated with extending fostering arrangements as "When I am Ready" arrangements;

Please refer to the appendix for 'Policy 5.14 – When I am Ready'.

Local Offer for Care Leavers in Wrexham

WCBC have developed a guide 'The Local Offer for Care Leavers in Wrexham'. This guide sets out the support that is available for our Care Leavers. Please refer to the appendix 'The Local Offer for Care Leavers in Wrexham'.

Section 10 – Concerns, complaints and allegations against foster carers

WCBC has a duty to ensure that all looked after children receive the best care possible to meet their needs.

WCBC is responsible for ensuring that any concern, complaint or allegation made against a foster carer is investigated in the most appropriate manner to safeguard looked after children.

Most allegations against foster carers are not substantiated and criminal prosecutions are rare. However, there have been substantiated cases of children being abused by their foster carers. There are also examples of situations where allegations have been made but abuse has not been proven. In some situations, there may remain an uncomfortable level of doubt where, although abuse has not been proven, neither has it been wholly disproved. Local Authorities therefore have a duty to investigate all concerns and allegations against foster carers.

Definitions of the levels of concerns and allegations are as follows:

Concern (Level 1)

Where the issue is related to day-to-day management / standards of care. For example (but not limited to):

- The foster carer having a child's hair cut without discussion with the parents or without referring to the scheme of delegation form.
- Concerns around the quality or nature of diet, clothing or routine care and low level discipline issues.
- An accumulation of extremely low level issues that have not met the threshold for complaints or allegations.

Serious Concern (Level 2)

Where the issue is more serious in nature, but still falls below the threshold for child protection investigations. This may be where there have been persistent or repeated concerns at level 1. For example (but not limited to):

- The foster carers parenting style and quality of care such as inappropriate discipline or behaviour management techniques
- Quality of working with other professionals / practitioners for example failure to adhere to the child's care and support plan
- Breach of confidentiality
- Unsuitable practice with regard to the child's family e.g. being discourteous towards parents
- An accumulation or worsening of 'one-off' or continuing low level concerns (level 1) about day to day care that have persisted, despite intervention and support from the Fostering Service

- Where there has been a complaint made by the Childcare Social Worker

Allegation - Level 3

An allegation of this nature would be when a child may be suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm due to the action or inaction of the foster carer(s). For example, where it is alleged that the foster carer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child for example, physical, emotional, sexual abuse, grooming or neglect
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against a child or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicated that they may pose a risk of harm to children for example (but not limited to) viewing of pornographic internet sites, consuming excessive alcohol whilst caring for a child or engaging in domestic violence.

How WCBC investigates and responds to these concerns and allegations is set out in 'Policy 5.17 – Managing Allegations Against Foster Carers'.

All level 3 'Allegations' will require child protection investigations under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Safe Care

Children in foster care, or their parents, may sometimes make allegations of abuse against foster carers. There are several reasons for this:

- Actions or intentions have been misinterpreted
- Someone thinks it will mean the child can return home as a result
- A way of drawing attention to anger and distress
- A way of drawing attention to abuse that has happened in the past
- A way of exercising some control over life
- A way to end a foster placement without losing face
- Abuse may have taken place

Children may link something that has happened in their current foster placement with an abusive event which has happened in the past. Children may misinterpret innocent actions such as putting an arm around them or bathing a younger child or using a video camera because of their history.

The risk of allegations can be minimised if foster carers put in place positive practices for safer caring, as outlined in the child's Safe Care Plan which will be completed jointly by the Fostering Service Social Worker, Child Social Worker, Child (if appropriate) and Foster Carers at the start of the placement. The Safe Care Plan will identify areas of risk and the plan of action to alleviate or minimise such risks. Please also refer to 'Policy 4.22 – Safe Care - Behaviour Management and Incident Reporting'.

Support for Foster Carers

Foster carers will be offered guidance and independent support throughout the allegation process.

Foster carers are also encouraged to access support from the Fostering Network which provides a support service to foster carers subject to allegations.

Fosterline Wales is open between 9.30am and 12.30pm Monday to Friday.

Freephone: 0800 316 7664

Email: Fosterlinewales@fostering.net

Fosterline Wales have developed a fact sheet for foster carers facing allegations:

[Fosterline Wales Factsheet: Allegations.](#)

Supervising Social Workers will continue to provide supervision and support to the foster carer(s) throughout the process. They will keep the foster carer(s) informed.

Payments

If a decision is taken to remove the child/ren from the placement, the Fostering Allowance will be withdrawn, as this is specifically for the child/ren. Any fee for skill / therapeutic care will continue to be paid until the investigation is completed and a decision is taken on the foster carer's registration is taken.

Section 11 – Complaints

Complaints

The Fostering Service, while endeavouring at all times to provide the best possible service, accepts that there may be occasions when families, looked after children, or carers feel dissatisfied with the service they receive and may wish to make a complaint.

The Fostering Service will address any complaint seriously and, where necessary, adapt its services as a result of lessons learned from any such matters.

The Fostering Service will ensure that no individual will suffer discrimination, disadvantage, withdrawal or reduction of a service as a result of making complaints.

Who can make a complaint?

Those eligible to make a complaint or a representation can be:

- Children who have been or may be fostered
- Any person on behalf of the child, providing that the child consents where competent to do so
- Any other child who may be affected by the placement
- Parents and guardians of such children
- Carers and prospective carers
- Those making an enquiry about becoming a foster carer
- Any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for a child
- Such other person as the Authority considers has a sufficient interest in the child's welfare to warrant it considering their representations
- Care leavers

Where the complainant is a looked after child or a child in receipt of care and support, the department has a duty under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to arrange for the provision of an advocate through the Local Authorities commissioned advocacy service, if the complainant is in agreement.

The Nature of the Complaint

There is no restriction on the issues that people can make a complaint about.

Examples may include:-

- Quality or appropriateness of service provided
- Quality of care provided
- Attitude, conduct or behaviour of staff
- Decisions relating to foster carers or placements

- Any process involved in such decision making
- Any service under The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 that the child or young person believes they are being denied.

This list is not exhaustive. However, any complaint in relation to the decision to approve, not approve or de-register a foster carer is subject to a separate procedure as specified within the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018.

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made to any member of staff or alternatively, a member of the Complaints Team. The complaint will be logged, acknowledged and in the case of a complaint, investigated and responded to within agreed time-scales.

This investigation will usually be undertaken by the Fostering Service Team Manager. However, where the complaint is about the manager, it will be passed to the Head of Service to investigate..

The Fostering Service hopes that you would feel able to raise your concerns with your Social Worker or the Fostering Service Manager. However, if you are unable to do so please contact:

Complaints Team
Wrexham County Borough Council
Guildhall
Wrexham
LL11 1AY

01978 292087
complaints@wrexham.gov.uk
www.wrexham.gov.uk/complaints

Responding to Complaints:

There are 2 stages in the procedure:-

- Stage 1 - Local Resolution
- Stage 2 - Formal Investigation

Stage 1 - Local Resolution:

- Every effort will be made by the manager of the Fostering Service to reach resolution at the first stage of the procedure; normally, this will be achieved on a problem-solving basis and involve a discussion with the complainant.
- Unless other timescales are agreed between the complainant and the manager, the discussion should take place within 10 working days. Following this, the Manager will write to the complainant within 5 working days summarising the outcome of the discussion and confirming what action will be taken (if any),

- At Stage 1, no person who is the subject of a complaint will be involved in any part of its consideration unless it is considered appropriate by the Fostering Service to do so. The letter of response will also state how to escalate the complaint if the complainant remains dissatisfied.
- The Fostering Service should inform the Complaints Team immediately when they receive a complaint to ensure it is recorded and managed in line with the procedures.
- Complainants have the right to request that their complaint is dealt with immediately at Stage 2 (formal investigation), however it is hoped that the department will be given the opportunity to respond to the concerns in the first instance.

Stage 2 - Formal Investigation:

If the complainant does not feel the matter has been resolved to his or her satisfaction, he or she can ask for the matter to be escalated to Stage 2. At this stage, the complaint will be investigated by an Independent Investigator – that is, someone who is not employed by Wrexham County Borough Council.

- The Complaints Team will acknowledge receipt of the request and explain in detail what the process involves. They will also confirm the name and contact details of the Independent Investigator.
- The Independent Investigator will arrange to meet with the complainant to agree the details of the complaint and confirm the desired outcomes.
- An Independent Person will also be appointed to ensure that the investigation is fair, unbiased, effective and covers all aspects.
- The Independent Investigator and Independent Person will review the complaint to date, check files and records and interview the relevant members of staff.
- At the end of the investigation, a report will be prepared for consideration by the Director of Social Services.
- Following consideration of the report and any recommendations made, the Director of Social Services will respond to the complainant in writing, enclosing a copy of the report. The response must:
 - summarise the complaint or representation;
 - describe the investigation undertaken;
 - state whether the complaint or representation is upheld or not upheld;
 - explain what action will be taken, if any, in light of the complaint or representation;
 - contain, where appropriate, an apology to the complainant;
 - enclose the Independent Investigator's report unless there is a specific reason why it should not. In that case this should be explained;
 - contain details of the right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales;
 - offer the complainant an opportunity to discuss the response and the Independent Investigator's report with an appropriate officer.
- The formal investigation stage (Stage 2) should be completed within 25 working days of the complainant agreeing the details of the complaint with the

Independent Investigator. If additional time is required due to exceptional circumstances (complexity of the complaint), this will be discussed with the complainant.

Unresolved Complaints:

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following receipt of their response at Stage 2, they can escalate their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). They will review the complaint and determine if maladministration has occurred.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

Telephone: 0300 790 0203
Fax: 01656 641199
e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Complaints by a child

In the event that a complaint is made by a looked after child or a care leaver, the authority has a duty to offer the child an advocate through the Local Authorities commissioned advocacy service (TGP Cymru).

The Local Authority have set up a [Comment, Compliment and Complaint form](#) for children and young people. There is also a copy of this in the appendix.

Worried about making a complaint?

Making a complaint will never go against you. The Fostering Service will ensure that no individual will suffer discrimination, disadvantage, withdrawal or reduction of a service as a result of making representations or complaints.

Compliments

The Fostering Service also encourages families, looked after children, and carers to get in touch when they feel they have received a particularly good service from the Fostering Team. Any compliments made will help the service identify areas that are performing well and will use these experiences to improve in the future.

These comments can be made to your Social Worker or the Fostering Service Manager. You can also complete the online compliments form via the WCBC website: http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/top_navigation/complaints/comments_form.cfm

Section 12 – Useful contacts

<u>Emergency Contacts</u>		
Wrexham Fostering Service	01978 295316	fostering@wrexham.gov.uk
Police (Emergency)	999	
Police (Non- Emergency)	101	
Emergency Duty Team-	0345 053 3116	
<u>All Contacts</u>		
CAMHS Wrexham	01978 725242	
Childline	0800 1111	www.childline.org.uk
Children's Social Care	01978 292 066	
Children's Rights- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)	0808 808 1001	help@nyas.net
Drink Line	0300 123 1110	
Drugs Line (Friendly, Confidential Drugs Advice - FRANK)	0300 123 6600	www.talktofrank.com frank@talktofrank.com
Education co-ordinator	01978 298653	
Epilepsy Wales	0800 228 9016	epilepsy.wales info@epilepsy.wales
Foster Carer Payments	01978 295306	
Fostering Network – General Enquiries	020 7620 6400	
Fosterline WALES – Information and Advice	0800 316 7664	fosterlinewales@fostering.net
Info Shop Wrexham	01978 295600	infoshop@wrexham.gov.uk
Looked After Nurse	01978 295343	
NHS Direct	0845 46 47	
Quit Line (smoking)	0800 002200	
Recruitment Officer	01978 295316	
TGP Cymru (Advocacy)	0800 111 6880	northwalesadvocacy@tgpcymru.org .uk
The Fostering Network in Wales	029 2044 0940	wales@fostering.net
Wrexham Maelor Hospital	01978 291100	

Section 13 – Index

Information	Page No
Abuse	32 – 35
Advocacy	37,38, 77
Alcohol	30, 55, 58
Allegations	15, 68, 69, 77
Annual Review	13
Approval	11 – 20
Babies	28, 30 – 31
Babysitting	40, 41
Bed wetting	58
Bullying	48, 50, 51, 77
Car Seat Safety	31
Care Leavers	6, 66, 77
Care Leaver Offer	67, 77
Care and Support Plan	25, 26, 36, 65
Children's Services	4, 5
Complaints	68, 71 - 74, 77
Conflict of interest	15, 77
Contact	34 - 39, 49,
Council Tax	23
Decision Making	16, 38, 72
Delegated Authority	19, 77
Diary	17, 18, 33, 37 - 40, 59,
DLA	21, 22, 77
Drugs	30, 55, 58, 75

Eating Disorders	56, 57,
Education	61 -64, 75
Emergency / Out of Hours Contact	13, 75
Emergency Placements	26
End of Placement	44, 45
Financial Support	21 - 24, 77
Health	52 – 60, 77
Home and garden safety	46, 77
Identity	27
Independent Living	65
Independent Visitors	38
Insurance	23, 24, 77
Kinship Care	8
LAC Nurse	53, 75
LAC Reviews	20, 37
Leaving Care	44
Leaving children unsupervised	40
Life Story Work	28, 62
Matching	25, 77
Medical Procedures	54, 77
Missing	41, 42, 77
Names	27
Offending	42
Online Safety	48, 49, 50
Out of hours support	13
Overnight Stays	38, 39
Parents	19, 27, 28, 36, 43, 44, 49
Pathway Plan	65, 66, 77

Payment	21, 22, 70, 75, 77
Payments	21, 22, 70, 75, 77
PEP	61 - 63
Personal Adviser	66
Pledge	6, 7
Pocket Money	16, 18, 21
Possessions	26, 28
Record Keeping	16 – 18, 23, 26, 27, 35 – 40, 55, 59, 77
Regulations	4, 7, 11, 25, 35, 72, 77
Risk taking behaviour	50, 77
Self Assessment	23
Self Employed	23
Sex Education	59
Smoking	55, 75, 77
Social Media	48, 49, 50
Social Worker	12, 53, 62
Statement of Purpose	4, 77
Supervision	12
Support for Foster Carers	13, 70
Tax Return	23
Termination of approval	14, 16, 77
Toy Safety	31
Training	9, 17, 19, 20, 25, 28, 49
Transition	65
Types of fostering	8 -10
When I Am Ready	66, 67, 77

Section 14 – Appendix / forms and policy library

The below forms, policies and information can be requested from your Supervising Social Worker.

Policies / Information

Fostering Service - Statement of Purpose
Policy 4.12 – Termination of Pregnancy
Policy 4.21 – Children Looked After who go missing
Policy 4.36 - Pathway Planning
Policy 4.22 - Safe Care – Behaviour Management
Policy 5.1 - Monitoring and Improving the Activities of the Fostering Service
Policy 5.2 - Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) and Conflict of Interest
Policy 5.3 – Insurance for Foster Carers
Policy 5.4 – Matching
Policy 5.5 – Consulting and Listening to Children in Foster Care
Policy 5.6 – Protecting Looked After Children from Bullying
Policy 5.7 – Health and Safety
Policy 5.8 – Smoke Free Policy for Foster Carers
Policy 5.9 – Removal of Foster Carers from the Foster Carers Register
Policy 5.10 – Complaints
Policy 5.11 – Records to be kept by Foster Carers
Policy 5.12 - Fostering Panel
Policy 5.13 - Fostering Allowances 2019/2020
Policy 5.14 – When I Am Ready
Policy 5.15 – Delegated Authority to Foster Carers
Policy 5.17 – Managing Allegations against Foster Carers
Policy 5.18 - Fostering – Safeguarding
Policy 5.19 - Disability Living Allowance – Looked After Children and Foster Carers
TGP Cymru Advocacy Services
All Wales Protocol for Missing Children
WCBC Corporate Parenting Strategy
Local Offer for Care Leavers in Wrexham

Forms

Incident Form
Delegated Authority Form
DLA Form
Transfer of monies Form
Financial Assistance Form
Medication Record Form
Children’s Compliments, Comments and Complaints Form
Travel Claim Form