Vale of Glamorgan Council Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

Make the Difference Foster for the Vale

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose has been drawn up in compliance with Standard 1 of The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. This Statement of Purpose outlines the range of information required under Standard 1.4

This document will be presented to cabinet for review on a regular basis.

THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The Vale of Glamorgan Council delivers its statutory responsibilities as a fostering service, as defined and set out in the Fostering Service (Wales) Regulations 2003 and Care Standards Act 2000, across teams within Children and Young People Services. Social workers for the fostering agency are based in the Placements and Permanency Team, situated within Haydock House, 1 Holton Road, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan.

The geographical area that the service covers is the area of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, described in the report of the Council's Joint Review (2007) as being …

" a largely rural area of some 33,000 hectares. It has a population of some 121,000 which has steadily increased in recent years because people have been moving to the area. Large parts of the area are rural but most people live in towns. The main town and largest centre of population is Barry, with nearly 50,000 residents.The Vale of Glamorgan is a relatively prosperous community and, in comparison with many other parts of Wales, has a healthy population. There are some areas which suffer from economic, environmental and social difficulties such as high unemployment, substandard housing, low educational achievement, poor health and high levels of crime. The most deprived wards are Castleland and Gibbonsdown in Barry; these are in the top fifth of Welsh wards in the index of multiple deprivation".

The Placements and Permanency Team provides family foster placements for Vale of Glamorgan children. The majority of its carers live within the boundaries of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

At the time of writing this statement, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has 95 registered foster care households looking after 121 children.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The fostering service within the Placements and Permanency Team holds five key service responsibilities. It recruits families that wish to apply to become carers for the Vale, assesses applicants, trains applicants and approved carers, supports approved foster carers and matches those foster carers approved by the Vale to children who are in need of being Looked After by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

In providing those key responsibilities the fostering service works within the legislative framework of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and the accompanying National Minimum Standards. The Fostering Service is subject to an annual inspection by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to ensure that it is compliant with these Regulations and Standards.

The fostering service also recognises good practice, and is committed to meeting, the UK National Standards as published by Fostering Network (1999).

CORPORATE PARENTS

The Vale of Glamorgan Council acts as a Corporate Parent to children it looks after. The primary responsibilities of the Corporate Parent are most directly associated with those children who need to be looked after away from their home. Once it is determined that a child needs to be looked after, the Corporate Parent must be satisfied that the child's safety, health and educational needs are met.

AIMS OF THE SERVICE

The Placements and Permanency Team aims to provide a range of placements for children and young people in need of being Looked After in the Vale so that they can live in an environment that keeps them safe from abuse and neglect and encourages their emotional, health and educational development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

- To provide a stable home environment for children and young people who are placed with Vale carers to allow them the opportunity to reach their developmental potential
- To provide a service that is committed to keeping the needs of the Looked After Child/ Young Person as central to its purpose
- To work within a clear and accountable framework for matching children and young people's needs to the skills of foster carers which takes account of potential risks
- To promote the racial, cultural and religious identity of children and young people and give consideration to the gender, sexuality, disability of fostered children and young people when identifying a placement
- A commitment to improving placement choice by the recruitment of foster carers from diverse backgrounds that reflects the community of the Vale
- The operation of a competency-based foster care system of assessing, reviewing and supervising carers
- The operation of a payment for skills scheme that allows for career progression for carers who wish to become full time, fee paid foster carers
- To provide qualified social work staff to supervise foster carers
- To operate a referral process, working in partnership with childcare social work teams, which reflects the needs of children and young people as identified by the National Assessment Framework.
- To work in partnership with childcare teams and Reviewing officers to support the implementation of individual children and young people's care plan

- To provide and maintain a comprehensive package of support to foster carers to ensure that lines of communication remain transparent and to minimise the risk of placement disruption. This includes a Foster Carers Forum, monthly practice support groups and a summer support scheme for looked after children and the foster carer's children.

- Provision of 24 hour support for carers, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year

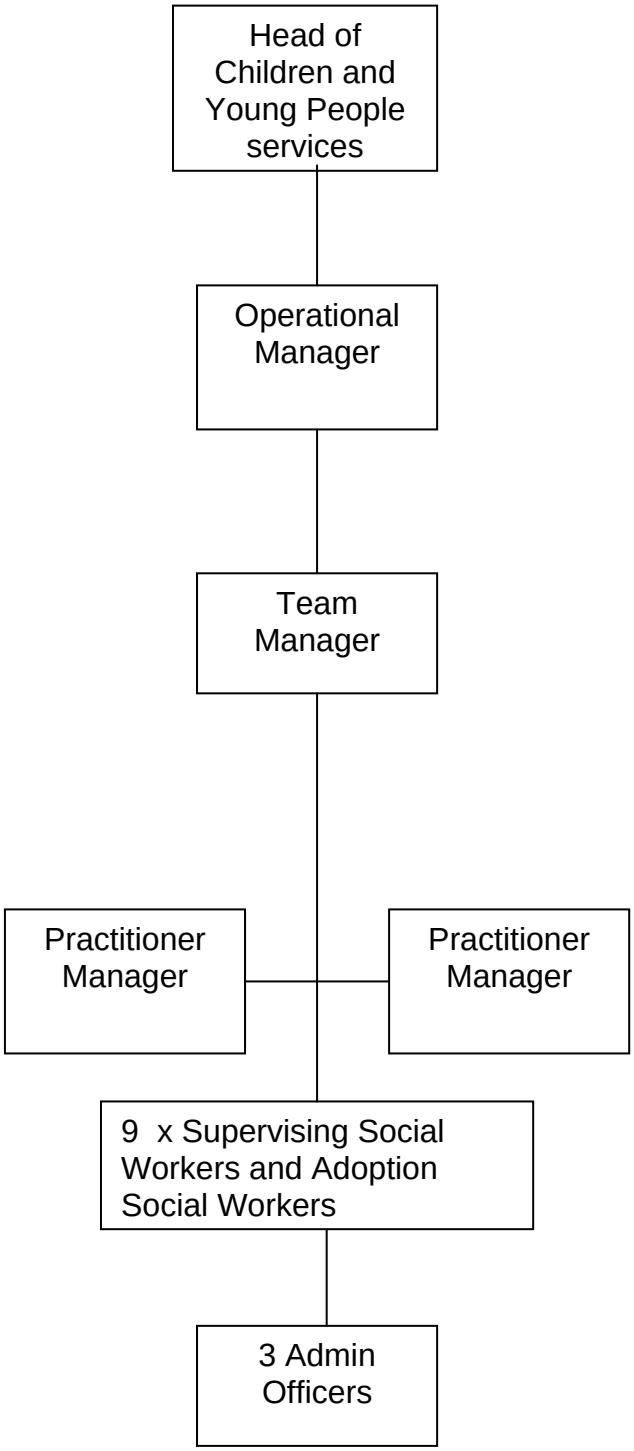
- Provision of a rolling programme of training for carers and staff, including NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People

- To operate appropriate information systems that will provide the opportunity of collating and monitoring relevant data with which to measure outcomes for looked after children that will achieve or exceed the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.

- To provide a professional service that helps to maximise positive outcomes for looked after children.

MANAGEMENT

The management structure of the service:



Make the Difference Foster for the Vale

STAFFING

Karen Conway RSW	Team Manager (Registered Manager)	DipSW (2005) PG cert in Managing PQSC (ongoing)
Martyn Blackmore RSW	Practitioner Manager	(CQSW 1987) (PQ 6)
Martina McCrossan RSW	Practitioner Manager	(DipSW 2005) CMS (2006)
Amanda Hindley Morris RSW	Social Worker	(DipSW 2002) (PQ 6)
Gareth Matthews RSW	Social Worker	(BA Hons Social Work 2007)
Elaine Williams RSW	Social Worker	(Dip SW 2003)
Tracey Snowdon RSW	Social Worker (Agency)	(Dip SW 2002)
Carol Sinnett RSW	Social Worker (P/T Agency)	(CQSW 1987)
Elaine Davidge-Evans RSW	Social Worker (P/T Agency)	(DipSW 2002)
Veronica Barker RSW	Social Worker	(DipSW 2006)
Martha Cirino RSW	Social Worker	(DipSW 2005)
Rebecca Couch RSW	Social Worker	(DipSW &MA Social Work (2005)
Colette Raymond	Administration Officer	ECDL
Carol Organ	Administration Assistant	

Caroline Harfoot	Administration Assistant	ECDL
Michaela Virgill	Administration Officer	ECDL

FOSTER CARE SERVICES PROVIDED

- Short Term Fostering Placements
- Emergency Fostering Placements
- Long Term Fostering Placements
- Respite Fostering Placements
- Pre –adoption fostering placements

RECRUITMENT OF CARERS

The Placements and Permanency Team is committed to recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of the children and young people of the Vale. To do this, a recruitment strategy has been drawn up as part of the wider placement strategy. Targeted recruitment materials have been designed to attract carers from ethnic minorities, carers who wish to foster large sibling groups, carers for long term fostering and carers for teenagers.

There is a pre-approval support and advice process for applicants who register an interest in applying to foster for the Vale. It is designed to reduce the amount of people who “fall away” from the Vale before reaching assessment whilst helping counsel out those for whom becoming foster carers may not be the right choice. It ensures that there is enough information and guidance provided to applicants to allow them to make a considered decision about whether they wish to proceed with their application before they reach assessment or panel. Preparation training for the children of applicants is also provided as part of the assessment.

The Vale runs a payment for skills scheme that offers a career structure to carers who wish to join it. We currently have carers at all four levels of the scheme.

The service produces an annual report on its Foster panel activities. A copy of this report is available on request.

RESOLUTIONS ADOLESCENT FOSTERING TEAM

The Vale of Glamorgan works in partnership with three other Local Authorities in South Wales: Caerphilly, Bridgend and Merthyr, to fund and oversee the management of a specialist fostering scheme for adolescents. The scheme is called Resolutions and its offices are based in Bridgend. It provides placements for the four member authorities only. These placements are for young people who display challenging behaviour and have already been in a number of family placements that have broken down. Resolutions also provide remand fostering beds. Resolutions offers a further career choice for Vale foster carers who may wish to work in a more challenging and financially rewarding area of fostering but do not wish to join a private fostering agency. Carers can transfer from the Vale of Glamorgan fostering service to its sister team Resolutions and vice-versa according to the career path a carer may choose

The manager of Resolutions is:

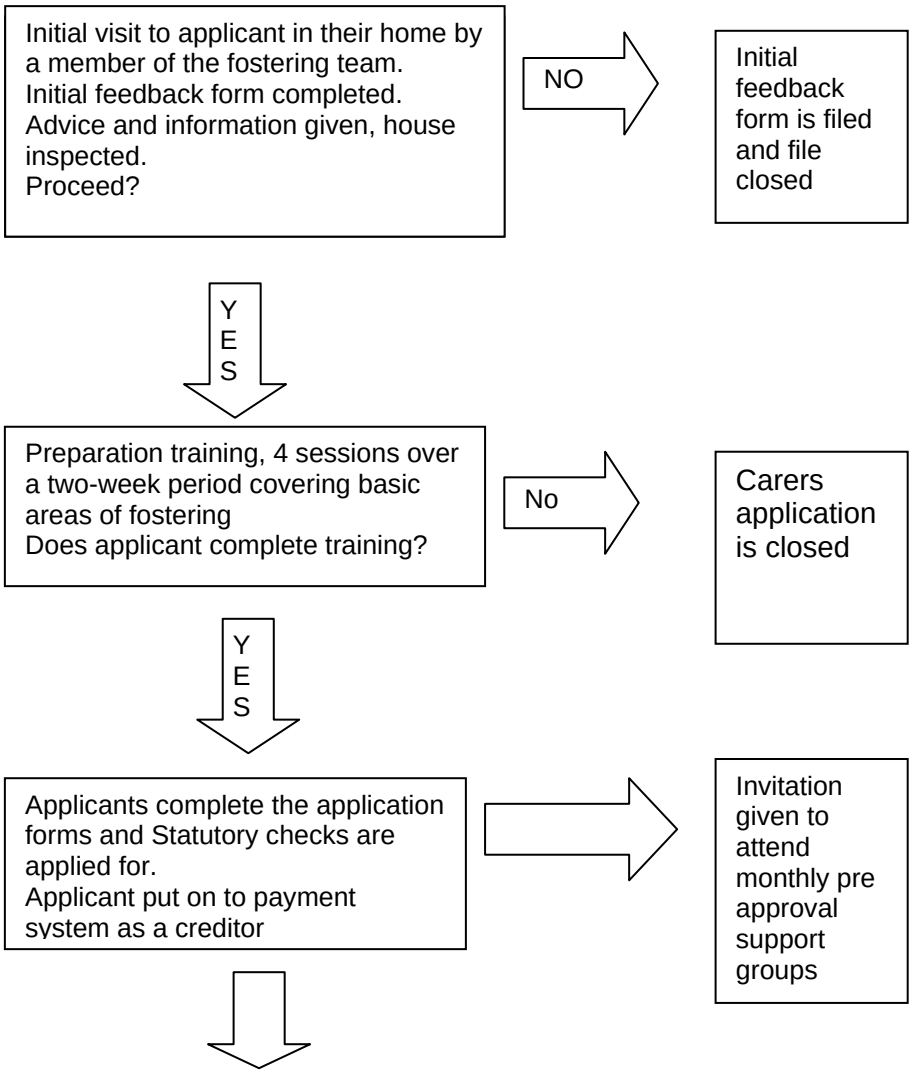
Mandy Jenkins	DipSw (1993) Diploma Applied Social Studies (1993) Practice Teaching Award (2001)

The team is staffed as follows:

Senior Practitioner
3 x Supervising Social Workers
1 x Administrative Assistant

RECRUITMENT OF CARERS

The recruitment and approval process is as follows:



Make the Difference Foster for the Vale

Is potential carer excluded as a result of information returned on CRB disclosure

YES

Applicant is informed of results and is counselled out

NO

Carer is visited to be given feedback on their training. Opportunity to withdraw application if feedback is negative.

Assessment by a qualified social worker, consisting of approximately ten home visits over a 3 – 6 month period.
Applicant continues to attend support groups

FOSTER PANEL

TRAINING, SUPPORT AND REVIEW OF CARERS

Approved carers will be offered a rolling programme of training covering the essential core subjects required to provide a skilled service. Carers are also given the opportunity to qualify in NVQ Health and Social Care Level 3.

The Vale of Glamorgan is committed to providing high levels of support and supervision to all of its carers and will provide professional supervision on a monthly basis at least, unless otherwise agreed with the carer. Supervision is formally recorded and signed by both the Supervising Social Worker and the foster carers.

A summer support scheme provides activities for young people who are in foster care and foster carers own children throughout the summer holidays.

All carers will be annually reviewed. This review will include an evaluation of training received in the past year and recommended training for the year to come.

FINANCIAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The rates of allowance and fees are available from the Placements and Permanency Team. The fostering service has a dedicated finance worker. The allowances are reviewed annually, and carers are provided with updated information on an annual basis. The fostering service has implemented the National Minimum Allowances for Foster Carers. The current allowances and fees are attached as appendix one.

The Children First Team provides specialist educational, health and mental health support for LAC and carers whom are experiencing difficulties concerning these

issues in looking after LAC. The Children First team consists of the following professionals:

1 x Educational Psychologist
1 x Special Needs Teacher
2 x LAC Nurses
1 x Co-ordinator

INSURANCE

All carers with the Vale are covered for Public Liability Insurance within the Vale of Glamorgan Council's own insurance policy.

The Vale fostering service pays for carer's membership of the Fostering Network, which ensures that carers receive legal insurance cover to pay for legal costs incurred as the result of an allegation made against them or a member of their immediate family.

All Vale carers are required to have their own house and contents insurance. In the event of damage caused as a result of fostering, carers are asked to claim from their own insurers. The Vale of Glamorgan Council will cover any excess or increase in premium incurred as a result of this claim. Should carers' own insurers reject an insurance claim then financial re-imbursement in relation to the claim will be considered by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Foster carers arrange their own car insurance and are strongly advised to have business cover.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The full procedure on making a complaint regarding the provision of services to a child or family is available from the Fostering Service. What follows is a brief summary. The complaints process follows the good practice outlined in the Welsh Governments guidance "Listening and Learning". Child protection concerns would proceed to S47 investigation process.

A complaint can be made to the worker involved, the workers manager, the Children's complaints officer or by contacting any member of Social Services staff who will pass the complaint on to the relevant manager. There are three stages at which complaints are dealt with.

Stage 1 – Local Resolution – complainant brings concerns to the attention of the person providing the services locally. We must make an attempt to resolve matters within 10 working days.

If it is not resolved, or the complainant asks for formal consideration, then the complaint proceeds to stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Consideration – the complainant has the right to ask the local authority for formal consideration of the complaint. This is usually an investigation, but could take some other form such as mediation. A report with findings, conclusions and recommendations must be produced. The authority must respond to the complainant within 25 days of the request to move to this stage.

If not resolved at this stage then the complainant may take any outstanding complaint about the actions or decisions of the local authority or the Independent Panel to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The PSOW may opt to take a complaint before the local authority procedure is exhausted.

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

Tel: 0845 601 0987
Fax: (01656) 641199

Complainants can also contact the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales who are responsible for the registration and inspection of fostering services in Wales.

CSSIW
Government Buildings
Rhydycar
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 4UZ
Tel: 0300 062 8800

SCRUTINY OF THE COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS PROCEDURE

All complaints and allegations received by the Placements and Permanency Team are collated centrally by the Registered Manager. A report is produced by the Registered Manager on an annual basis on the nature, process and outcomes of these complaints and allegations. This report is given to the Operational Manager of Children and Young People Services and also to the Vale's Child Protection Co-

ordinator. The report is also presented to the Foster Panel for independent scrutiny as part of their quality assurance role.

THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF DETERMINATIONS PROCESS

Existing foster carers and applicants who are unhappy with a decision made regarding their non-approval or approval status can apply to BAAF to have this decision scrutinised by the Independent Review of Determinations body. This is an independent panel that can make recommendations to the fostering service regarding decisions made.

Contract Manager,
Independent Review Mechanism Cymru
7 Cleeve House
Lambourne Crescent
Cardiff
CF14 5GP
Telephone: 02920 755406

WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

The Fostering Service has a policy for staff on “whistle blowing”. This has been adapted to apply to foster carers and is available from the Placements and Permanency team.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Vale of Glamorgan Fostering Panel meets on a monthly basis. The panel has a responsibility for ensuring the quality of assessments presented to them, and for the general service provided to carers by the Placements and Permanency team. This is monitored via carer’s reports which are completed as part of the foster carer’s annual review and also from management information which is presented to panel on a regular basis. The Policy and Quality Assurance Officer along with senior management audit the fostering service every two years.

From January 2008, an annual Quality Assurance Report has been submitted to the CSSIW as part of the annual inspection process.

This statement of purpose was formally reviewed on 13.01.05. It was further updated on 3.6.10 and 23.01.2012

Appendix one

The Vale of Glamorgan Council~

Foster Care Allowances

From January 2012

Ages of child	Amount paid
0-4 years	£140.00
5-15 years	£127.00
16+ years	£159.00

Carer Level	Amount paid
1	£0.00
2	£53.20 per child
3	£155.40 1st child £135.20 subsequent children
4	£322.00 1st child £280.14 subsequent children