

Purpose

To ensure that the CFT has a clear strategy for working with and supporting its Foster Carers which is documented and understood.

Policy

The CFT recognises that a strategy for working with and supporting Foster Carers needs to include as a minimum:

- arrangements for training and development
- encouragement for self-help groups
- professional supervision
- assistance in dealing with other relevant services
- Out-of-Hours support
- arrangements for the Review of Foster Carers
- respite care
- support services.

Arrangements for training and development

The CFT is committed to ensuring that its Foster Carers are trained in the skills and knowledge required to provide high quality care and to meet the needs of each child placed in their care.

The CFT requires all prospective Foster Carers to participate in assessment training by completing in full the Skills to Foster programme of training. By participating in this training, prospective Foster Carers will have the opportunity to meet experienced Foster Carers and benefit from their input.

The CFT is committed to providing an on-going programme of in-depth training for Foster Carers to further develop their skills and to tackle any weaknesses. All Foster Carers are required to participate in such training. Mandatory training requires an update every three years, carers are required to complete up to 6 training courses a year for main carers and 3 for the second carer. Training should consist of both face to face and online training.

All Carers are required to complete the TDS (Training Development Standards) Induction Training within twelve months of approval.

Additionally, the CFT is committed to enabling Foster Carers to participate in training leading to a professional qualification, such as a Diploma in Social Care and Health, once they have gained sufficient experience, this will be assessed on an individual basis.

The CFT is committed to ensuring that training on Safeguarding is provided to all members of fostering households. Safeguarding & Safer Caring will be addressed at the assessment stage, during post approval training and during qualification training, such as the TDS. All fostering households are also required to produce a Safer Caring Statement as part of their assessment and this is to be reviewed on a regular basis and forms part of a Foster Carer Review.

The CFT ensures that Foster Carers' individual training and development needs are regularly discussed in supervision and at their Foster Carer Review and such will inform the foster carers personal development plan.

The CFT is committed to giving specific consideration to the training and development needs of the sons and daughters of Foster Carers, both at the assessment stage and whilst their parents are actively fostering for the CFT.



The CFT values the comments of Foster Carers on the effectiveness of individual training events and is committed to ensuring that such comments are taken into consideration by the CFT when reviewing its training provision.

The CFT is committed to ensuring that all training fits within a framework of equal opportunities & anti-discriminatory practice. Training is organised to encourage and facilitate attendance by Foster Carers.

Foster Carer Team Meetings

The CFT will facilitate regular Foster Carer Team Meetings, providing a forum where Foster Carers, experienced and new, can meet together to offer each other support and advice. The meetings will also provide a forum wherein Foster Carers can be kept informed of events at the CFT and in fostering generally.

Additionally, the CFT will encourage the setting up of a Foster Carers' Independent Meetings by providing premises, administrative support and housekeeping. The aim of such a group is to provide Foster Carers with an opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other in a less formal setting. In doing so the CFT recognises the importance of encouraging peer support, friendship, empathy and mutual recognition between its Foster Carers.

The CFT will also organise occasional social events for fostering families. Any children or young people in placement with its Foster Carers will be included.

Supervision

The CFT recognises that its Foster Carers require regular supervision that is of a high standard in order to enable them to carry out their duties. In view of this the CFT has developed the following documents that represent its position in relation to the supervision of its Foster Carers:

- Staff and Foster Carer Professional Supervision Policy
- Staff and Foster Carer Professional Supervision Procedure
- Supervision Contract
- Record of Supervision.

Additionally, the allocated Supervising Social Worker for a Foster Carer will alternate supervision sessions with home visits. These will be of a less formal nature and better encourage the involvement of all in the fostering household.

The CFT provides its Foster Carers with a Foster Carer Handbook, which contains comprehensive guidance and underpins supervision and can found at <https://www.fosteringhandbook.com/childrensfamilytrust/>

Assistance in dealing with other relevant services

The CFT recognises the importance of providing Foster Carers with a high standard of support in relation to dealing with other relevant services. Given this, a member of the Professional Services Team, usually the allocated Supervising Social Worker, will assist by

- liaising and negotiating with Responsible Local Authorities and other services in connection with a child / young person in placement, in order to help ensure that the needs of a child / young person in placement are met and that proper consideration is also given to the needs of all members of the fostering household
- accompanying its Foster Carers to meetings such as Planning Meetings, Looked After Reviews and meetings with education and health professionals, as necessary.

Out of Hours Support

The CFT understands that Foster Carers need to feel secure in the knowledge that they can contact the CFT's Professional Services Team in an emergency and/or outside office hours. In view of this, the CFT has



developed the following documentation that represents its position in relation to the provision of out-of-hours support to its Foster Carers;

- Guidance to Foster Carers in Relation to Out of Hours Support
- Emergencies Guidance.

Arrangements for the Review of Foster Carers

The CFT shall conduct a joint Review with each Foster Carer within 12 months of being approved by the CFT's Fostering Panel. The first review of a Foster Carer's approval will be brought to the CFT's Fostering Panel within one year of the date of their initial approval. Reviews will be undertaken in a manner that -

- satisfies the CFT of the continuing capacity of the Foster Carer to carry out the fostering task
- provides the Foster Carer with an opportunity to feed back any issues or concerns arising during the previous period
- contributes to essential information on the quality and range of services provided by the CFT
- informs recruitment, assessment and training strategies
- informs the development and review of the CFT's Policies and Procedures.

A Foster Carer Review will also be prompted if there is a significant change in a Foster Carer's circumstances and/or if there has been a Child Protection Investigation involving a Foster Carer.

Respite Care

The CFT recognises that access to Respite Care can be a key factor in promoting placement stability and has developed a Respite Policy which represents its position in relation to the provision of respite to its Foster Carers. A copy can be found on the Local Resources at <https://www.proceduresonline.com/childrensfamilytrust/>.

Support Services

The CFT recognises that in addition to the support that Foster Carers will receive from their Supervising Social Worker, access to specialist support may be particularly helpful in relation to fostering some children / young people. Therefore, the CFT will ensure that its Foster Carers have access to specialist support from an Education Caseworker or a therapist as needed.

Additionally, the CFT will provide its Foster Carers with individual membership of Foster Talk, which will enable them access to advice (including legal advice) and insurance from that organisation. <https://www.fostertalk.org/>

The CFT will also ensure that its Foster Carers are aware how to access Fosterline, which is a confidential, and independent national advice line for Foster Carers.