



Statement of Purpose

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Please note: for the purpose of this document, the word 'placement' is used throughout. In line with the implementation of the restorative model, it is fully recognized that this word may not be the right choice for individual children; however, each child will wish for the place where they live to be called something different, and home can have powerful connotations for cared for children and young people and therefore placement is used in this instance.

1 .Introduction

Torbay Fostering's Statement of Purpose has been developed and produced to meet the requirements and principles contained within the following legislation and guidance:

- The Fostering Service Regulations 2011, amended July 2013 and April 2014
- The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011)
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Care Planning, Placement & Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) 2015
- The Children Act 1989 • The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 2: Care Planning, Placement & Case Review 2010
- Delegation of Authority: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010 (July 2013)
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendment to the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Vol 4: Fostering Services (July 2013)
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

The Statement provides information about the Torbay Fostering Service, including the services and facilities offered. It is available on Torbay Council website or in hard copy to:

- Any person working for or on behalf of Torbay Council
- Any foster carer or prospective foster carer of Torbay Fostering Service
- Children and young people living with Torbay carers
- Professionals who work alongside the service
- General public on request

In accordance with regulations, Torbay Fostering Service submits copies of this statement to Ofsted.

2. Aims and Objectives of our Service:

In line with the implementation of the restorative model of practice, the vision of Torbay Fostering Service is place children and their needs at the forefront of everything we do; considering the crucial and integral role of our fostering families in achieving this vision, the aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that our foster carers feel like a central part of the team around the child.

Torbay Fostering Service strive to create a sense of 'family' assessment, planning and support provided to fostering families, whilst ensuring children always remain at the core of its provision. Every child and fostering family is different and has specific needs; the service wishes to fully understand these needs in order to achieve fully child and person centred planning which is fluid and adaptive, and takes into account change and development. The goal is to ensure the provision and delivery of a high quality fostering service that focuses on achieving the best possible outcomes for children.

Torbay Fostering Service aspires to be self-aware, to be understanding of its strengths and able to quickly identify any vulnerabilities or opportunities for learning and respond appropriately. The service aims to provide a targeted and focused operational and strategic response to areas of service improvement, in order to be responsive and dynamic in adjusting and adapting to the needs of our children and fostering families.

As a service we aim to be:

F – forward-thinking and focused on the continued professional development of our staff and our carers

O – open to transparent communication and participation with our fostering families

S – safe, secure and stable

T – trustworthy and reliable

E – encouraging and proactive in respect of our fostering families' education and training

R – robust in respect of statutory and regulatory compliance

I – innovative in terms of service organisation and development

N – nurturing, supportive and caring

G – guided by best practice

In line with Torbay's vision for cared for children, and in keeping with the interim Corporate Parenting Strategy, Torbay Fostering Service want all cared for children to feel loved and nurtured, and for them to be supported to reach their full, individual potential. Torbay recognise that, to achieve this, there needs to be collaborative joint working across a range of professionals and parties and the Fostering Service aim to consult with and involve all of those involved in a child's care planning, including but not limited to: children and young people; our fostering families and their supervising social workers; social workers allocated to a child; Team Managers and senior leaders; independent specialists; Fostering Panel members. We are open to and welcome feedback, as this is an integral foundation on which the development of the service can be built. We have open lines of communication and an openness of approach, with the ability and desire to be innovative in delivering relevant and effective services to meet identified needs.

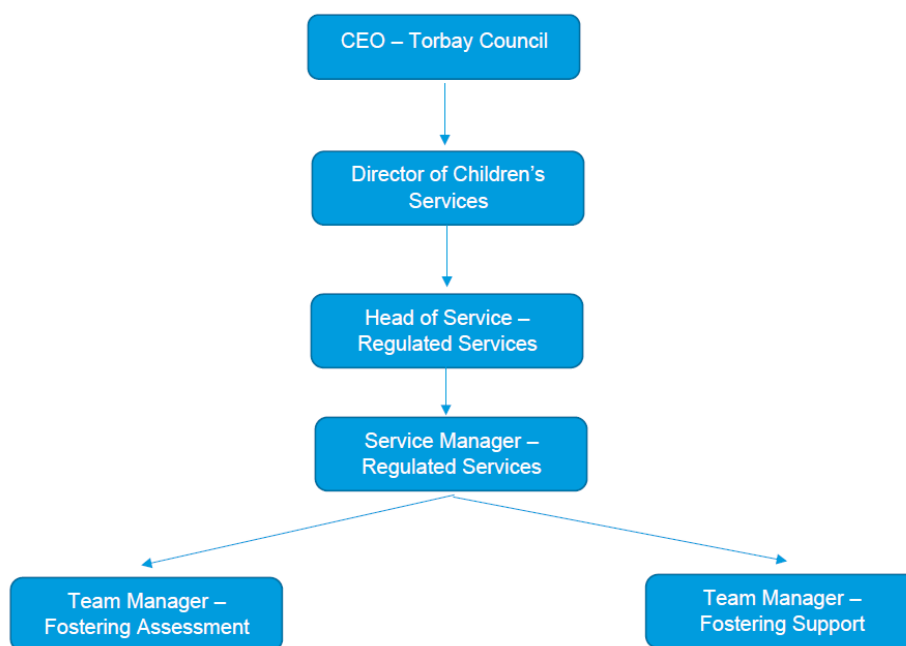
Torbay Fostering Service's objectives for service provision are:

- We want cared for children to live in an environment which is warm, stable and consistent.
- We want cared for children to have access to fostering homes which provide a safe, secure and nurturing base from which they grow into confident and happy young people who have aspirations for their future.
- We want cared for children to feel supported to achieve the best possible outcomes, not only in the short term but in the medium to long term too.
- We want cared for children to feel fully involved in their planning.
- We want cared for children to feel like they have a voice in the development of services designed to support them.
- We want social workers to understand the value of the fostering role and how their actions and practice can support the delivery of high quality fostering services.
- We want to provide social workers with the relevant training and development opportunities to help them to under this.
- We want to provide fostering families with high quality and individualised training and development opportunities.
- We want to provide support of out fostering families which is personalised and inclusive of appropriate support out of hours.
- We want to continue to recruit fostering families who have a wide range of skills and experience, who can offer homes to a wider range of cared for children, including sibling groups, older children or those children who may have additional needs.
- We want to continue to recruit fostering families from a diverse background who can offer a range of homes for cared for children, thereby enhancing the quality of the matching process.
- We want to be a service which demonstrates its core values of equality and the value of diversity through its operational actions as well as its strategic review of practice, policy, training and development.
- We want to be a service which is absolutely compliant with the statutory, regulatory and legislative framework under which we work.
- We want to be a service which recognises learning opportunities and ensures that service delivery is robustly monitored, reviewed and developed.
- We want to develop a team approach, which centres on the child and their needs, and which ensures that all involved in supporting a child are focused on the achievement of best practice.

3. Organisational Structure

Torbay Fostering Service is based at Children’s Services, Tor Hill House in Torquay, and sits under Regulated Services. The Fostering Service consists of two teams: Fostering Assessment and Fostering Support.

The governance structure is as follows:



Day-to day management and development of services is overseen by the two Team Managers, who are both qualified managers with experience in social work with children and families. Both Team Managers oversee a team of staff, inclusive of fostering assessment social workers, fostering supervising social workers, Community Care Workers, business support officers and a Recruitment and Events Co-ordinator.

Our Fostering Assessment Team focuses on recruitment activity, assessments of prospective foster carers and support for prospective fostering families going through the Panel approval process.

The Recruitment and Events Co-Ordinator role is a new role within the Torbay Fostering Service; this is an officer who works closely with the Fostering Assessment Team Manager, Communications and other professionals to understand our local demographic and support them to view the potential skills people may have for fostering, thereby contributing to the development of a wider range of fostering families and skillsets.

Our Fostering Support team focuses on the support and supervision offered to approved foster carers, support through the Annual Review process, ongoing or updating assessments and investigations, participation and feedback work, training and development and the implementation of support groups and other celebratory and collective opportunities for our cared for children and their fostering families.

Torbay has its own Fostering Panel that meets regularly to make recommendations for the approval of foster carer candidates as well as to receive reviews of approval. The panel also consider other matters that are brought to them by the social work team.

Torbay Children's Services also has its own Learning Academy and works with a number of universities to offer social work placements for students as well as offering a robust and supportive programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers employed by Torbay, some of whom may work within the Fostering Service.

All the Managers and Supervising or Assessing Social Workers hold social work qualifications and are registered with the Social Work England.

All staff working at Torbay have access to a wide range of continued professional development and training opportunities which are co-ordinated by Torbay's Learning Academy.

The social work staff establishment on 31st March 2022 comprised of:

- Two permanent Team Managers
- Two permanent Assistant Team Managers
- Three full time social workers (Fostering Support)
- Two part time social workers (Fostering support)
- Two full time Newly Qualified Social workers – completing the ASYE programme (Fostering support)
- Four assessing social workers full-time (Fostering Assessment)
- Two part time Social workers (Fostering Assessment)
- Three Community Care Workers providing services across the fostering service.
- One Recruitment and Events Co-Ordinator that came into post in July 2021
- One Fostering Panel Chair and one vice chair
- Fostering Panel members
- Fostering Panel Advisor (this role is undertaken by the two team managers).

4. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

Fostering families are, within the matching process and at the point of placement, provided with comprehensive information about the children placed with them; as part of the fostering role, foster carers are expected to maintain high standards in terms of confidentiality. Foster carers, as well as staff, are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interests in a timely and appropriate manner.

Torbay Fostering Service also maintain records in respect of fostering families and cared for children which are subject to National Standards and GDPR or data protection legislation.

5. Principles and Standards of Care

Torbay Fostering Service and its staff are committed to promoting and achieving the very best possible outcomes for cared for children, and to providing the highest quality standard of support and service to them, their families and our carers. The standards of care, as outlined below, are in accordance with the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 as well as the principles outlined in the National Minimum Standards 2011. This applies to all of our carers, no matter their approval and what fostering service they provide, and is application to Connected Carers also.

- The welfare, safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount, as enshrined in legislation.
- Cared for children have a voice and that voice is vitally important. As a service, we will ensure that there are as many avenues for children's participation and feedback as possible, and will try where possible to reflect children's wishes and feelings in their care planning. We aim to be as honest and transparent in our communications and interactions with children as possible.
- Every cared for child will have a comprehensive and up to date care plan, health plan and education plan.
- Every cared for child will have a care plan which reflects their cultural and religious beliefs; cared for children will be supported and encouraged to engage in activities which reflect these beliefs, in line with the child's wishes and feelings and their developmental understanding.
- Every cared for child will live in an environment which is free from oppression, discrimination and prejudice; cared for children will be supported to develop a secure and positive sense of their identity, who they are, what is important to them and their aspirations.
- Torbay Fostering Service will play a critical role in achieving the aims and intended outcomes of a cared for child's care, health and education plan.
- Torbay Fostering Service will work in a multi-agency partnership as part of the team around the child, to achieve the aims within the care, health or educational plan and to promote safe, consistent and meaningful family time whose those people who are important to the child.
- Foster carers will have a handbook which guides their practice and provides clarity in terms of expectations, responsibilities and standards.

6. Services we provide

Torbay Fostering Service aim a range of fostering placements which meet the needs of our cared for children:

Emergency Fostering Placements

These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home at short notice, and for short period of time.

Short Term Fostering Placements

These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home on a short term basis; this could be for anything up to two years, for children who are cared for subject to proceedings and who need a safe and secure home whilst decisions are made about their care. These carers may then be involved in bridging to adoption, support to reunification, transition to other family care arrangements, transition to a longer term fostering placement or bridging to independence.

Long Term/Permanent Placements

These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to children whose plan is one of long term fostering, and when final decisions have been made that a child cannot return home to the care of their parent/s or previous caregiver. These long term placements offer security and stability for children for their minority and often into their adulthood. These carers make a long term commitment to a child, and are often matched as a long term permanent placement for the child following a year in placement, through the Permanence Panel.

Respite Placements

These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to children, who are often in a long term placement, as part of their plan of stability and permanence within that placement, to provide appropriate support to long term carers. At times, these placements may be use as a short term measure, and as part of the bridging process to alternative placements.

Parent and Child Placements

Torbay do not currently offer parent and child placements however we have identified a number of carers who have an interest in offering this type of placement, and are looking to support them with training opportunities to enable them to do this.

These are carers with specific training who can offer placement to parent/s and child/ren. These may be young parents, under the age of sixteen, or parents of any age, who require intensive support, guidance and modelling to developing their parenting capacity in a safe environment.

Placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, to enable them to adjust fully to being in a new country, and provide a nurturing safe base from which these young people can begin to recover from their experiences and forge a life for themselves in their new surroundings.

Sibling placements

These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to sibling groups, not only due to the physical accommodation and support within the home but also due to the skills and knowledge of these carers.

Resilience placements

Resilience foster carers are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to support young people aged 10-18 years who currently live in residential care and/or who may have particularly complex needs, or young people who may be in the youth justice system. For those who have the knowledge, skills and experience to care for a child with these needs, it's a unique fostering opportunity where carers provide long term, family based placements, fostering one young person and supporting them into adult life.

Staying Put Placements

These are carers who are able to offer a home to those care experienced young people aged eighteen and above who they have previously fostered.

Matching

All matching considerations focus, as the central and most important factor, the specific needs of the child, and the skills, knowledge and capacity of the identified carers' to meet these needs; this is reflected in the short term and emergency matching process as outlined on the right. This ethos and approach is embedded within the matching process, whether emergency, short and long term matching process for all cared for children and young people; the needs of the child are the central focus of matching discussions and meetings and placement planning.

Key questions to ask, which are reflected in the matching flowchart below, are:

What are the child or young person's specific needs? What are the foster carer or placement provider's specific skills and knowledge and how would this impact on their capacity to meet these needs?

Are there other children, whether birth children or cared for children, in placement? How does impact on the potential match?

What gaps in terms of capacity are there and could these be mitigated by additional support wrapped around the placement?

Have matching discussions involved the appropriate people i.e. the child's social worker, the foster carer or placement provider, education staff or the Virtual School, other professionals who know and understand the child and their needs?

Has location been considered? Where is the potential placement? Would this placement enable a child or young person to remain within their established local network?

What are the short, medium and long term outcomes intended for this child or young person within this placement? Is this intended to be a longer term permanent placement or a short term, bridging placement? What is the exit plan?

Once this analysis of the available placements has been completed, the Initial Matching Checklist and Record of Discussion (on the right) should be completed and recorded on the child's file. This includes any immediate need in respect of placement support, for example enhanced placement fees, associated therapy through the fostering agency and any other support that may be required to meet the needs of the child. If funding is required, appropriate HOS agreement or ratification through Access to Resources should be sought AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. No placement should be accepted on the basis of a promise of additional support, if appropriate authorisation has not been sought and confirmed.

Decision-making

All decisions to place a child need to be ratified by the relevant Head of Service for the child, to confirm that the decision is in line with the child or young person's care plan and there are no alternative plans that could be implemented. Head of Service endorsement is required to initiate a search for a placement and to accept a placement.

Initial Matching Checklist and record of decision				
Placements need to be entered and authorised on PARIS by close of Monday for carers to receive payment in the first week of placement. If later than Monday, payment will be made to carers the following week.				
Name/s of child(ren)	Age	Date of birth	Gender	Ethnicity
Needs and Outcomes received?	Yes		No	
Further Information Requested? ie Risks; location; contact arrangements, transport etc				
Potential In-house carers who match the child's profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List a maximum of 5 and rank in order of preference starting with "best match". Include brief description of reasons: strengths and vulnerabilities; risks of potential match and people consulted ie Supervising Social Workers, Practice Managers etc. 				
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
Have any of the above carers been ruled out, if so for what reasons?				
Have any variations of approval / exemptions been considered? If so, what carers have been considered?	Yes		No	
Has the carer been spoken to?	Yes		No	
Has the referral be given to the carer? (by email or phone)	Yes		No	
Is additional support required for this placement i.e. transport, enhanced respite?	Yes		No	
Has ATR been attended or HOS approval been given to this additional support?	Yes		No	
Has the carer agreed to the placement? If no please record reasons below	Yes		No	
Has the child's social worker been given carer's details? If CSW has declined please give reasons below:	Yes		No	

Short Term or Emergency Matching Flowchart for Children's Social Workers

Child requires alternative placement

Any change of placement MUST be authorised and agreed by the Head of Service for the relevant service area.

1. Details of circumstances of placement change with details of what action has been taken to stabilise the placement/prevent the need for destabilisation through change of placement as well as a rationale for the social work view in relation to the proposed change to be sent to the relevant Service Manager and Head of Service.
2. Needs and Outcomes to be completed and sent to Team Manager for quality assurance. Once approved, this must be sent to the Placements Team.
3. Any Expressions of Interests received need to be reviewed in line with the child's needs as the paramount consideration (as below).

Review of Expressions of Interests

In reviewing expressions of interests received, the primary consideration must be the child/ren's needs, the impact of this placement on the child and the capacity of the proposed carers to meet the child or children's needs.

Key Questions:

What are the child or young person's specific needs? What are the foster carer or placement provider's specific skills and knowledge and how would this impact on their capacity to meet these needs?

Are there other children, whether birth children or cared for children, in placement? How does impact on the potential match?

What gaps in terms of capacity are there and could these be mitigated by additional support wrapped around the placement?

Have matching discussions involved the appropriate people i.e. the child's social worker, the foster carer or placement provider, education staff or the Virtual School, other professionals who know and understand the child and their needs?

Has location been considered? Where is the potential placement? Would this placement enable a child or young person to remain within their established local network?

What are the short, medium and long term outcomes intended for this child or young person within this placement? Is this intended to be a longer term permanent placement or a short term, bridging placement? What is the exit plan?

Child's social worker and Team Manager must complete the Initial and Emergency Matching Form

Any agreement to progress with a proposed placement will need to be agreed by the Head of Service for the relevant service area.

Child's social worker and Team Manager must send the completed form to the Placements Team, Service Manager and Head of Service to agree the placement.

7. Foster Carer Recruitment, Assessment, Approval and Reviews

Recruitment

Torbay remain committed to progressing a robust and carefully implemented recruitment process, which enables us to support those with an interest in fostering to understand the potential role they may play as fostering families for existing and future cared for children. From the point of initial enquiry, potential foster carers are provided with comprehensive written and verbal information to help them through the recruitment and assessment journey, in addition to ongoing support and training; by doing so, we hope to develop and expand our in-house placement sufficiency, and develop our existing fostering family to include more and more prospective carers who can offer safety, security and stability as well as high quality care and nurture to our cared for children. This includes the recruitment of foster carers from a wide range of diverse backgrounds; Torbay have fostering families from a range of different geographical locations also, underpinning the concept that you do not need to live in Torbay to foster for Torbay.

The Torbay Fostering Service continue to aim to be as creative as possible in our recruitment drive, including the recruitment campaigns within local and specialist publications, attendance and engagement at local shows and events, advertising through the transport network, the use of social media and the internet.

Torbay Fostering Service are also collaborating currently with Home for Good, a faith organisation which focuses on the recruitment of families of faith who may be interested in fostering.

Assessment

Torbay Fostering Service aim to be both rigorous and supportive, in terms of their assessment of prospective foster carers, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all cared for children placed with our fostering families.

The two-stage assessment process adheres to the Fostering Regulations and, from initial enquiry to approval, is expected to take a maximum of five to six months. At Torbay, we run stage one and two concurrently, to prevent any unnecessary delay as a result of pending checks.

Any initial enquiry, no matter how this is received, is followed up with a phone conversation which would include an opportunity for prospective carers to ask and receive a prompt answer in relation to any aspect of the fostering experience or process. An initial enquiry form is also completed.

If there is agreement to proceed, the potential applicant is offered a home visit by a member of the Fostering Assessment Team. This offers further opportunity for queries and questions to be answered, as well as the time to hear information about the realities of fostering in more detail, and to discuss whether fostering is a realistic and possible option for them to explore. It enables the Fostering Assessment Team to view the potential applicants' accommodation, to consider their motivation, their experience, any practical considerations, and to discuss whether they are ready to apply to foster. If appropriate, an application form will be emailed to the applicant as well as appropriate forms which outline issues in respect of consent, following the initial visit. Torbay also send to the prospective applicants a record of the Initial Visit.

At Torbay Fostering Service, we encourage and promote prospective foster carers to attend and engage with Skills to Foster training as soon as possible, to ensure that this is accessible as a means of supporting them through the assessment process.

The applicants then begin an assessment that includes the requirements laid down in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards in

Foster Care (2011), Assessment and approval of Foster Carers 2013 (amendments to Children Act 1989) and Schedule 4 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (where children are fostered by relatives and friends). Stage 1 comprises of all the formal checks. This includes: DBS checks on applicant/s and any members of the household aged over 18; Local Authority checks; health checks including an assessment by the applicant's GP; and references from former partners, employers, children's schools, and three personal references. Once all the checks and references are returned, a formal decision is made regarding successful completion and whether the assessment proceeds to Stage 2.

In Stage 2, an in-depth assessment is undertaken by a qualified, registered assessing social worker, based on the CoramBAAF Form F. A series of home visits are arranged with the applicant/s in order to complete a comprehensive report covering family background, education and employment, past and present relationships, interviews with all other members of the household, support networks, experience, attitude and approach regarding the care of children, ability to work as part of a team, understanding of identity and diversity, and motivation and preparation for fostering. The applicant/s are required to participate in a two day Skills to Foster training course, feedback from which is included in the assessment report; as above, prospective foster carers are supported to attend this training as soon as possible in their assessment journey.

At the end of the assessment, the completed report is presented to the Torbay Fostering Panel. The applicant/s, accompanied by the assessing social worker, are required to attend Panel to meet with panel members. The Panel is made up of independent members with backgrounds in health, education, the law, fostering, and social care as well as those who may be care experienced themselves.

The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), which is normally shared immediately with the applicant/s. The final decision about the applicant/s' approval as a foster carer is made by the ADM. If an applicant is unhappy about the decision, they have a right of appeal which can be made direct to the Independent Review Mechanism or to Torbay Children's Services within twenty-eight days.

Approval

Once approved by the ADM, newly approved foster carers receive a letter confirming their approval status and the terms of their approval. The Fostering Support Team Manager ensures that each new fostering family is allocated a Supervising Social Worker who is responsible for their induction, training, support and supervision.

Foster carers are required to complete their Training, Support and Development Standards within the first twelve months.

Reviews

Foster carer approval is reviewed annually in accordance with Fostering Regulations and Standards. In certain situations, a review may be conducted sooner. These could include:

- A significant incident or a serious allegation.
- Significant concerns regarding a foster carer's practice.
- A change in the foster carer's circumstances such as the breakdown of a relationship, a new relationship, or significant changes to a foster carer's lifestyle or health, or in the sad circumstances of a death within the family.

The review is undertaken by either a foster carer's supervising social worker or an independent reviewing social worker who, in compiling their report, will refer to feedback and reports from:

- the supervising social worker.
- the foster carers.
- the children placed.
- other members of the household including foster carers' own children.
- the birth family if possible.
- any other relevant professionals.
- educational providers of the children placed.

The review process provides an invaluable opportunity for reflection, to take stock of the previous twelve months and the experiences of the children placed, the fostering family and the fostering service in that time. The process focuses on the foster carer's training and development, and what impact this has had on their practice; in addition, the experiences of the child/ren in their care will be central to this process, and how the foster carers have been able to meet the children's needs and contribute to planning which achieves best outcomes for the children.

Full information about this process can be found in Torbay's Procedure Manual:

[Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

7. Support and Supervision

Each foster carer household is allocated their own supervising social worker who will:

1. Work in a person-centred way to build a supportive relationship with the fostering family.
2. Provide consistent and timely communication to fostering families, whether through direct visits, virtual visits, telephone or email communication. Visiting frequency is determined by the needs of the fostering family, as well as the needs of the children placed within the fostering family. Torbay Fostering Service have provided all fostering families with a comprehensive contact list, to ensure that no foster carer feels unable to make contact with appropriate representatives of the service at any given point.
3. Be a listening ear for the fostering families they support. This could be as a means of reflecting on the experiences of the fostering family that day, or that week, or that month; it could be to as a collaborative means of overcoming barriers or finding solutions to practical issues; it could also be as a means of working together to discuss and reflect on some of the challenges of fostering, and how as a team we can work together to overcome these challenges. This communication is vital; it is an integral way in which we work together with fostering families to implement the child's care plan and placement and promote the best outcomes for the child/ren.
4. Attend placement planning meetings, placement review or support meetings, Cared For Children's reviews, stability or disruption meetings and other meetings to support foster carers as required.
5. Undertake formal monthly supervision. This will focus on a wide range of factors which influence the foster carer's practice however will also be a reflective space in which to discuss elements of fostering and/or the fostering family's own personal circumstances which are impacting on their wellbeing or ability to meet the needs of the child/ren in placement. Elements which may be discussed within supervision include but are not limited to: training and development; the fostering family interactions and dynamics; report or record writing including timeliness and quality; adherence to the safe care plan or review of the safe care plan; how the outcomes identified in the placement

plan are being progressed; family time arrangements and the impact of this on the child/fostering family; the cared for children within placement; the child/ren's health, education, emotional wellbeing, identity and cultural and developmental needs; other elements such as savings for the child; the children's participation in extra-curricular and community based activities; the children's growth and development or preparation towards independence; celebratory moments such as the progress and achievement of each child's specific outcomes.

6. Ensure that all statutory checks, such as DBS, medicals, health and safety, are up to date.
7. Ensure that unannounced visits have been undertaken in line with the Torbay policy of a minimum of two unannounced visits per year to the fostering family.
8. Liaise appropriately with all professionals involved in the children's care, in particular the allocated social worker for the child.
8. Visit and see the child/ren placed and undertake direct work with the children, to ascertain their views, and to monitor the standard of care being offered to any child placed.
9. Contribute to or carry out the foster carers' annual review of approval.

Torbay Fostering Service also run a number of support groups, which are organised at various times throughout the year and through various platforms. Torbay are committed to learning from feedback and participation and are constantly looking for ways in which we can make our training as accessible and purposeful and meaningful for fostering families as possible.

It is intended that support groups provide an opportunity for fostering families to meet with each other and share their views and experiences of fostering; in addition, fostering families can access support, guidance and signposting through these groups, and receive information about recent changes to policies and guidance and practice.

Currently, Torbay Fostering Service offer:

- *A support group run by CAMHS which offers support through a therapeutic lens.
- *Special Guardianship Support group for all Special Guardians receiving support from the Special Guardianship Team.
- *A general foster carer support group.

Foster carers receive financial payment that values and respects their skills, learning and commitment. Detailed financial information and guidance around expectations are made available to each foster carer.

Torbay Fostering Service currently also have access to an out of hours team which offers direct support to fostering families whereby issues in relation to placement instability have been identified; this is operating currently on a three month basis and provides support from 6pm-10pm each weekday evening and from 12pm-10pm on weekends and Bank Holidays.

Torbay Fostering Service also commission specialist support, for example mediation or advocacy services, in situations whereby this is required for foster carers through the allegation process.

There are often times when a cared for child may have an accident which causes damage within the fostering family household. When this does happen, we ask foster carers initially to claim on their own household insurance. In the event of premium increase, excess payments or situations whereby insurance does not cover loss or damage, fostering families are asked to discuss this with their supervising social worker and the Fostering Support Team Manager.

Full information about this process can be found in Torbay's Procedure Manual:

[Supervision and Support of Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

9. Foster Carers Handbook

Foster Carers are provided with a virtual link to the Fostering Handbook, and a hard copy can be requested where required; this gives our fostering families a comprehensive overview of the service and the fostering role.

Children's Services policies and procedures can be found on the website at: [Torbay Children's Services Policies and Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

10. Training and development

At Torbay, we believe that every moment of the fostering experience provides rich opportunity for learning and development; we are committed to supporting fostering families to grow and learn and develop their practice, and recognise that this will be on an individualised basis, with at times a bespoke training need.

Fostering families begin their training journey during the assessment and approval process and build on this learning as they move on to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards. Fostering families receive a full induction, in order to enable them to understand the expectations of the fostering role, the key principles and values which underpin the fostering role and how they can best meet the needs of the cared for children they may be supporting and caring for.

Foster Carer training includes:

Record Keeping for Foster Carers

Safer Caring

LADO Role and Allegations Against Foster Carers

SGO PACE Training

Delegated Authority for Foster Carers

Paediatric First Aid

Life Story Work

Introduction to attachment theory and practice

Grief, Loss and Change

Family Time Supervision

Bridging to Adoption

Fostering Changes Training

In certain circumstances, Torbay Fostering Service will explore alternative types of bespoke training for individual or groups of fostering families, where this is an identified need.

11. Protecting children from harm

Torbay Fostering Service operates a safe recruitment process for all staff employed by the agency. In addition, there is a rigorous vetting and assessment process undertaken with all potential carers. Enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks are repeated every three years for all carers and staff.

Our policy framework and guidance, which underpins our service, includes a focus on safe caring, safeguarding, health and safety, bullying, behaviour management and positive reinforcement, confidentiality and data protection, e-safety and the safe use of internet and social networking, and this is all linked to the training and development programme for our fostering families.

Any safeguarding concern is addressed in a timely way, by the management team and often in conjunction with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Torbay Fostering Service track and monitor patterns of safeguarding concerns, in order that this can inform service development and the implementation of best practice, for example reviews of the training schedule or review of policy, procedure or guidance.

12. Provision of Therapeutic Services

The Fostering Service holds a support group for fostering families; this is led by Torbay Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), who provide therapeutic input to children and young people in foster placement, consultation to carers and other professionals. CAMHS comprises of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, child and adolescent mental health practitioners and social workers with expertise in children's mental health. The support group is intended to provide support and consultation to carers in respect of the therapeutic needs of the children they care for, thereby enhancing placement stability for cared for children and ensuring that cared for children have access to the support and services that they need.

Cared for children can access support for their mental health, emotional and therapeutic wellbeing through a number of different avenues: consultations between the child's social worker and CAMHS; consultation with the in-house therapeutic social worker, who is trained in play therapy; bespoke packages of support which are accessed through the Access to Resources Panel.

13. Provision of Health Promotion Support Services

Fostering families can seek support and advice from the Designated Nurses for Cared For Children and Young People who in conjunction with other health professionals oversee the Review Health Assessments undertaken annually.

Within Torbay's Public Health service, there are specialists whose focus is on sexual health and who offer signposting, advice, information and support to young people and their fostering families in the field of sexual health.

Cared for children with disabilities can also access support and advice from the Learning Disability Service.

Torbay Fostering Service works with a wide range of professionals, both within Children's Services and with partner agencies, to ensure cared for children's health needs are met and that health outcomes for cared for children are aspirational with continued improvement.

14. Provision of Educational Support Services

Torbay's Virtual School has the responsibility and oversight of education for cared for children and consists of: a Headteacher, who oversees and monitors the attainment, progress, attendance and

inclusion of carers for children and works with corporate parents and other partners to strive towards the best possible educational outcomes for our carers for children; teachers, who work directly with schools and carers for children across the education stages and who can provide signposting, advice and support to carers for children and their fostering families; other professionals who have skills and expertise in the impact of trauma and attachment needs on a carer for child's ability to engage in learning and who can also be a beneficial source of support and advice for fostering families.

Torbay Fostering Service recognises the value of education and attendance for every carer for child and the links education has to other elements of a carer for child's care plan. Working together with the Virtual School, and across Children's Services, we strive towards a cohesive and holistic joint working approach, with the Virtual School as key contributors of the care planning process.

Torbay Fostering Service have an expectation that holidays will not be taken in term time and that children are not routinely taken out of school, unless in exceptional circumstances and certainly not as a rule.

Foster carers are expected to attend and contribute to Personal Education Planning Meetings with children and young people and, where appropriate, the supervising social worker will also attend. These meetings explore what additional support or resources a carer for child may need to achieve the best possible educational outcomes, in line with their identified needs.

15. Provision of Leisure, Sport, Cultural and Religious Activity

Throughout the training and supervision provided to fostering families, the importance of leisure provision is highlighted; fostering families are expected to seek out and support carers for children and young people, to engage in activities and experiences which enhance their sense of identity, self-worth and self-esteem, social interaction and independence.

As corporate parents, Torbay are consistently seeking ways to support fostering families to make use of local leisure activities. This has in the past included free access to local attractions, events and provisions. Torbay Council are committed to developing a corporate parenting offer to our fostering families and the carers for children they look after. There are ongoing communication with local businesses and other organisations, to secure a range of benefits, offers and retail discounts for foster carers and their families.

Information on community play schemes, events, clubs and activities during holidays are provided to carers on a regular basis.

Honouring, upholding and promoting the religious and cultural beliefs and customs of a carer for child or young person is incredibly in terms of their identity formation and understanding of their life story. We ensure that information is available to provide understanding of different cultures and religions. If support is needed to enable a fostering family to ensure that carers for young people are able to practice their beliefs and customs, this will be provided by the service.

16. Care experienced provision

The Carers For Children social work teams work closely with the Fostering Service and other professionals to provide an integrated approach to meeting young people's needs. In addition, every carer for young person is allocated a Personal Advisor from the Care Experienced Team from the age of sixteen, to support during the crucial transition phase and ensure that the young person is enabled to develop a relationship as early as possible with the named Personal Advisor who will support them following transition to adulthood.

Torbay are committed to supporting cared for young people to remain in their foster placement post-eighteen, if this is in line with their assessed needs and the young person and carer's wishes and feelings.

The 'Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People and Adults' details all of the support a previously cared for child will benefit from once they reach the age of eighteen.

17. Consultation and Participation

Torbay Fostering Service value the views, ideas and feed back of all of our fostering families and all of our cared for children and young people and their families. It is important to Torbay that not only do we regularly seek the voice of our fostering families and cared for children, but that we also ensure we are clear about how we act on this consultation and participation.

Foster carers can share their views about any aspect of the service through formal consultation meetings, in support groups, or individually during their supervision or during the annual review of approval process. In addition, the Head of Service for Regulated Services now meets regularly with a group of foster carers, with the Fostering Team Manager, to discuss certain issues and topics which are relevant to our fostering community.

Children are formally consulted about their placements during their reviews and their foster carer's annual review of approval and through the direct work undertaken by their allocated social worker and the fostering supervising social worker.

Feedback from fostering families

Fostering Families said: "There is a lack of variation and flexibility in terms of the foster carer training offer".

We have:

- Confirmed the First Aid Training Offer.
- Met with the Children with Disabilities Team and devised a schedule of webinars and training relating to the care of children with additional needs.
- Approached foster carers, as experts in their practice, to consider their involvement in offering training for our fostering families.

We are going to:

- Continue to explore a more flexible and varied training offer, with the right balance of external and internal trainers.
- Provide training which is in webinar or recorded form, and therefore can be access on multiple occasions at times suitable for fostering families.
- Consider, in line with the continued professional development of foster carers, specific training which meets their developmental needs.

Fostering Families said: "Historically, there has been a lack of consistent communication from senior managers; there needs to be more in the way of participation work, in order that improvements to the service are based on the voice of the fostering community."

We have:

- Ensured that key information has been communicated to fostering families through the use of the group email format. This has included key updates relating to the change in the payment run following the migration to Liquid Logic.

- The Head of Service has written a number of formal thank you letters to foster carers, recognising the impact of their work.
- Created a monthly participation group with a number of foster carers and the Fostering Support Team Manager.
- Created a Communications document, which lists the key contact details for all managers across Regulated Services; this has been sent to all of our fostering families.

We are going to:

- Create a schedule of surveys which are used to collate the views of fostering families throughout the year and in line with improvement planning.
- Write a monthly HOS email with key updates and celebratory good news stories.

Fostering Families said: "There has historically been no way of knowing when a child is matched long term to carers; we would like to be able to celebrate these moments with the children we care for."

We have:

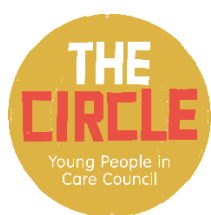
- Created a Long Term Match Tracker, to ensure there is senior management oversight of those matched long term, and those who are likely to be matched long term in the next twelve months.
- Every child who is matched long term now receives a personalised letter from the Head of Service.

We are going to:

- The Design Team are working on a certificate. Once this has been created, every child who is long term matched (no matter when this match was made) will receive one; every child who is matched from now on will receive one with their personalised letter.

Participation and consultation with children

The Circle, Cared For Community and the Pledge:



The Circle is our new name for the Young People in Care Council; the Cared For Community is a group of cared for children and young people, who meet regularly and who inform ongoing service improvements.

The Pledge for Cared and Care experienced young people has been signed off by the Local Authority having been taken to the Operational Scrutiny Board and then a member of The Circle and a care experienced student who took this to the Council.

The Launch of the Pledge took place on the 1st June 2021, and involved a radio recording using the Boom Bus from Sound Communities, with invited guests from the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Circle took part in a Language that Cares half term project where they were interviewed about their thoughts about certain language used in their care journey; this will go towards their own film later in the summer. This film has now been shared with the Corporate Parenting Board, social workers, Team Managers and fostering families [<https://youtu.be/orMW-sUrygw>].

The Circle also took part in a session with the Director of Children's Services reviewing their Language that Cares work and adding more detail to the Project.

This work has been directly fed into a review of the Restorative Language Framework which is place across Children's Services, and focuses in on the point of our young people, as made in their film, that children should have a say in respect of the language being used to talk to and about them. In addition, the Cared for Community is involved in current participation work in relation to Cared For review paperwork, with the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Head of Service Participation

The Head of Service meets with two cared for children on a monthly basis, to discuss with them their views, and their perspective on being a cared for children, and a child with involvement from social care. These meetings are then fed into an ongoing participation feedback loop, with the notes and learning shared across Children's Services, with specific actions arising from each meeting.

Bright Spots Survey

From April 2021 to June 2021, Torbay worked with Coram BAAF in respect of a survey of four to eleven year old cared for children.

Some of the key findings, relating to the placements offered by our fostering families and other providers, are included below.



- **Feeling safe:** 99% of children and young people aged 4-18 in Torbay always felt safe where they lived.



- **Feeling settled:** Significantly more young people (95%) aged 11-18 in Torbay felt settled where they live, compared to young people (78%) looked after in other local authorities.



- **Having fun & hobbies:** 100% of children aged 4-11 in Torbay reported that they got to have fun and take part in hobbies or activities outside of school.



- **Liking bedrooms:** 100% of children aged 4-7yrs and young people aged 11-18yrs liked their bedroom.

Relationships with carers



- **Trust:** 100% of children aged 4-11 and 97% of young people aged 11-18 in Torbay trusted the adults they live with.



- **Support for learning:** 100% of children aged 8-11 and young people aged 11-18 in Torbay reported that the adults they live with showed an interest in their education.



- **Sensitive parenting:** 100% of young people aged 11-18yrs felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling.



- **Sharing confidences:** 72.5% of young people talked regularly with their carers about things that mattered to them – higher than both the general population and the average for other LAs.



- **Being trusted:** 100% of young people in Torbay thought they were given opportunities to show they could be trusted.

18. Complaints and Representations

Torbay Fostering Service take complaints very seriously and aim to deal with complaints in a timely manner.

We aim to provide the best possible support and care for children and young people, their families and out fostering families wherever possible and we believe that everyone has the right to express their views and raise concerns. We also believe that these views and concerns should continue to shape and improve the service we deliver.

Wherever possible, Torbay Fostering Service aim to manage complaints informally and resolve concerns at this stage. When this is not possible, the formal complaints procedure is triggered.

The Complaints Policy gives clear timescales and areas of responsibility and can be access through this link: [Complain about Children's Social Care - Torbay Council](#)

19. Allegations

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated and actioned through Torbay Safeguarding and Reviewing Service, reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board under the procedures for Investigating Allegations against Adults Caring for Children.

The Torbay Safeguarding policies and procedures are followed.

Foster carers are offered independent support as outlined above in the Support and Supervision section of this Statement.

More information can be found in Torbay's procedure manual: [Allegations Against Foster Carers \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)

20. Monitoring performance

Torbay Fostering Service aim to provide the best possible care for children and maintain high standards in respect of children's care. In order to ensure that this is consistently achieved, Torbay have rigorous and comprehensive quality assurance frameworks in place, with audit activity across Children's Services taking place regularly.

The Fostering Service routinely provides reports in respect of the profile of the cared for children cohort and their placement types, information relating to vacancies and investigations, recruitment activity and performance, staffing considerations, training and development, service outcomes and aims and any other information relating to the performance of the service and the wellbeing of our fostering families and our cared for children.

Themes and patterns arising from Fostering Panels are tracked and monitored, with specific actions arising from any consistent areas for development.

Compliance with policies and procedures is monitored by managers in supervision and audit and dip sample activity. All staff receive regular supervision, the frequency agreed according to their role, experience and need.

The performance of the service is also monitored by Ofsted inspections, the Corporate Parenting Board, the Sufficiency Board, the Children's Operational Board, the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the senior leadership team.

Areas of key quality assurance focus for the Torbay Fostering Service are:

*The numbers of cared for children, in relation to their plan of permanence.

*Placement stability, with a key focus on minimising disruption for cared for children and enhancing placement stability which involves monitoring the number of placement changes for cared for children.

*Placement sufficiency and the recruitment of new fostering families.

*Compliance, including foster carer training, DBC checks, timely Annual Reviews and fulfilment of basic training requirements.

- *Timely and quality foster carer supervision.
- *Purposeful and comprehensive placement planning meetings.
- *The use of placement support and stability meetings.

21. Contact details

Ensuring good quality communication

We know that sometimes it can be difficult for our fostering families to know who to contact; this may be because a social worker is off unwell, or is engaged in other duties or has left the Local Authority. We also know that this can feel very frustrating for our fostering families, especially when they are key areas to discuss about the children they are caring for.

If you ever need to speak to anyone about a child, below is a list of useful contacts within Children's Services, who will be able to answer your question, confirm information about the allocated worker for a child and point you in the right direction of the person or people you need to speak to.

**Kelly Gosney: Head of Service, Regulated Services, 07795 603 128,
Kelly.gosney@torbay.gov.uk**

OFSTED Contact Details

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

22. Fostering Family Charter

Torbay fully recognise the role of teamwork in promoting the best possible outcomes for a child. As such, using the principles of the Fostering Network's foster carer charters, Torbay have developed their own service-specific version which is outlined below.

Torbay Fostering Service: Fostering Family Charter

Roles and commitments: this is what we can expect from each other. This charter represents a commitment and a promise between everyone, to work in partnership in the best interests of the children we care for.

The role of the corporate parent:

Torbay want to be corporate parents who:

- love and care for their children and want to support them to be the very best they can be.
- demonstrate this love and care by taking an active interest in children's achievements and life events.
- act in the best interests of children and young people at all times and make decisions which help them to achieve the best outcomes they can.
- seek and value the views of children and young people, and act on them.
- oversee and challenge the level of support children receive in terms of their health, wellbeing, education, aspirations, accommodation and preparation for independence.
- Ensure that children and young people are safe and achieve stability in terms of their home environments and experiences, their connections and relationships and their educational or employment.
- ensure children and young people have access to effective and high quality services to meet their needs.
- **whose Officers and Members across the Council think firstly about cared for and care experienced children and young people in respect of every decision they make, in order to improve the Corporate Parenting Offer.**

The role of Torbay's fostering service:

Torbay Fostering Service want to:

- provide stable and high quality homes for cared for children, in which they feel loved, valued and nurtured.
- continue to recruit, train and approve a diverse range of fostering families who are able to meet the needs of our cared for children.
- Listen to our fostering families, and tailor the service they receive to meet their needs.
- Deliver quality support to our fostering families, to support them in meeting the needs of our cared for children.

The role of the fostering family:

We want our fostering families, with our support, to be able to:

- Build and maintain positive and nurturing relationship with the children they care for.
- Provide a stable and loving home for the children they care for.
- Understand and recognise the experiences of cared for children and how this may impact on their presentation, behaviour and their needs.
- Work with professionals to achieve the very best possible outcomes for the children they care for.
- Support cared for children and young people to have ambition.
- Prepare cared for children and young people to for the realities and challenges of independence.

What fostering families and the fostering service can expect from the corporate parent:

The Corporate Parent commits to:

- Providing the most appropriate and beneficial support to our fostering families.
- Listen to our fostering families and act on their feedback.
- Respect foster carers as professionals in their own right, who are often the expert in terms of an understanding of a cared for child's needs.
- Ensure that foster carers are appropriately and routinely consulted about key changes to policy, procedure or service delivery.
- Invite foster carers to all relevant meetings concerning the child they care for and involve them as much as possible in decision-making.
- Try to make our fostering families feel like the integral part of the service that they are, and as part of the professional team working towards best outcomes for the child.
- Be mindful of the fostering family and their own rights.
- Share all relevant and necessary information with a fostering family caring for a child; this should be in written format where possible prior to a placement being made.
- Ensure that children placed with a fostering family have an up-to-date care plan which is shared with foster carers in a timely manner.
- Work with fostering families to ensure that delegated authority is considered and implemented in a way which promotes a sense of belonging within the fostering family home and does not contribute to a feeling of 'otherness' or 'difference' for the cared for child.
- Discuss with fostering families the language they would like to be used when talking to them or writing about their work.
- Be clear about the expectations and boundaries of the role, including decisions which fostering families cannot make without the involvement and input of the Corporate Parent.
- Respond in a timely way to any queries or questions fostering families may have.
- Ensure that fostering families feel part of the corporate parenting structure and decision-making process where possible.
- Communicate openly and transparently.

What fostering families can expect from the fostering service:

Torbay Fostering Service commit to:

- Respect foster carers as professionals in their own right, who are often the expert in terms of an understanding of a cared for child's needs.
- Invite foster carers to all relevant meetings concerning the child they care for and involve them as much as possible in decision-making.
- Ensure that the service is statutorily compliant with Fostering Regulations and guidance.
- Treat foster carers as colleagues and as a critical part of the team around the cared for child.
- Be mindful of the fostering family and their own rights.
- Share all relevant and necessary information with a fostering family caring for a child; this should be in written format where possible prior to a placement being made.
- Make sure that fostering families have access to support and guidance at all times.
- Provide foster carers with important information, including matters relating to finance such as tax, allowance and any additional entitlements.
- Provide access to a Fostering Handbook and the Torbay Children's Services Procedures Manual.
- Support fostering families through the assessment, approval and review process and provide training opportunities which meet the needs of our fostering families.
- Ensure that fostering families have a bespoke annual training plan.
- Listen to fostering families when they request additional support and think creatively about how this support can be provided.
- Ensure that foster carers have regular, high quality supervision.
- Communicate openly and transparently.
- Give honest and open feedback, which supports fostering families to improve their practice.
- Ensure that foster carers allowances, expenses and other financial costs are paid in a timely manner.
- Provide opportunities for fostering families to meet together and share their experiences and good practice.
- Support fostering families in respect of the implications of family time arrangements.
- Explore with fostering families their wishes and feelings in terms of professional development and support them to access what they need to achieve these goals.
- Discuss and consult with fostering families about any proposed changes to the service.
- Ensure that fostering families have the right support when dealing with allegations.
- Meet with and speak to fostering families about their views of the service and consult them in respect of service development planning and action.
- Recognise and thank fostering families for the work that they do on a routine basis.
- Celebrate achievements and progress with fostering families.

What the corporate parent and fostering service can expect from the fostering families:

Fostering families commit to:

- Communicate openly and transparently with the Corporate Parent and the Fostering Service.
- Meet the standards as set out in the Fostering Regulations and guidance.
- Adhere to Torbay's policies and procedures.
- Be proactive in reporting any changes in family circumstances to the service.
- Seek timely advice in relation to any factor which may be influence our ability to fulfil the fostering role.
- Be honest with the service about any challenge or difficulties we may experience.
- Maintain a focus on the child at all times and do all we can to build and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship with the child.
- Report any concerns relating to the child to the appropriate professional.
- Advocate on behalf of the child and promote their wishes and feelings.
- Recognise our importance to the child, and maintain a relationship where possible when a child moves on.
- Appreciate, value and uphold a child's sense of who they are and respect their identity needs, including their ethnicity, religious beliefs and their linguistic and cultural heritage.
- Promote an equitable expectation in terms of the child's safety, wellbeing and happiness as we would for our own child.
- Support the child to develop their decision-making capacity in line with their age, understanding and needs.
- Try as best as possible to stand by the child, and demonstrate to the child that they are them for them, no matter what.
- Encourage the child to engage in opportunities for participation and feedback.
- Provide children with the most positive experience of family life and work with all involved professionals and agencies to achieve the best outcomes for the children being cared for.
- Contribute to key meetings about the children we care for.
- Understand the importance of a cared for child's birth family and their family relationships and work with the service and other professionals to ensure cared for children have positive, consistent, safe and meaningful family time with those important to them.
- Recognise the value of a cared for child's life story and actively support the development of their understanding of this.
- Be open and willing to engage in training and professional development opportunities through our fostering career.
- Attend relevant training opportunities.
- Engage in and contribute to support groups.

Signed (Corporate Parent) :

Signed (Fostering Service):

Signed (Fostering Family):