

Worcestershire Children First Fostering

Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework

Introduction:

In Worcestershire we want to achieve sustainable improvement to services for children, young people, their families, and carers. This focus on improvement is a shared priority across the organisation from our Lead Member, Chief Executive and DCS through to our front-line practitioners and support staff.

This is our WCFF Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework; this is the Framework that includes our approach to Performance Information, Auditing and Service User Feedback.

The aims of WCFF are derived from WCF’s vision for Children’s Services in Worcestershire, "to make a positive impact on the lives of our children and young people aged 0 to 25years, and their families, by providing outstanding, innovative, child and young people-focused services where practice and practitioners flourish and we maximise life opportunities for all, or more simply put **“to ensure children are happy, healthy and safe”**. This is the foundation stones of our approach to Quality Assurance.





Contents:

1. Worcestershire Children First Fostering
2. Our Practice Standards & Procedures
3. Our Framework
4. How much are we doing - Performance Management
5. How well are we doing it – Audits
6. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People
7. Workforce Development
8. Governance
9. Review of Framework

1. Worcestershire Children First Fostering

- Worcestershire Children's First (WCF) is an independent not for profit company which is wholly owned by Worcestershire County Council (WCC). Worcestershire Children First Fostering Agency (WCFF) sits within the company as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
- WCFF offers placements for children who are looked after by WCF on behalf of the Local Authority, WCC.
- WCFF provides fostering placements including family and friends foster placements for looked after children and young people which safeguard and promote their welfare and enhances their life chances.
- The Statement of Purpose will detail the aims and objectives of WCFF, set out its quality assurance mechanisms and the range of services provided to children, foster carers and family and friends carers.
- The Statement of Purpose includes details of the staffing and organisational structure, management arrangements and complaints procedures.
- The Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and is based on Standard 16 of The National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011. It is subject to formal approval by the Director of Children's Services, WCF.

2. Practice Standards & Procedures

Practice Standards and Procedures - it is the single point of reference for Social Workers, Social Care Workers and Team Managers to check what is expected of them in relation to specific Social Work tasks; this includes our Practice Standards, Policies and Guidance.

Why do we need practice standards?

- So that all managers & practitioners have clear guidance on roles and responsibilities
- We have a consistent approach to our work
- There are clear expectations for staff to measure themselves against
- There is a focus on the quality of practice and not just timescales
- We are a confident professional service, respected by families and professionals that will champion and where necessary challenge others to promote children's welfare
- There is a set of standards that quality assurance work can be measured against

Our procedures can be read at: [Foster and kinship carers important documents | Foster and kinship carers important documents | Worcestershire County Council](#)

3. Our Framework:

Worcestershire Children First Fostering has a whole service approach to Quality Assurance, this focuses on three domains, there are:

1. How much we are doing – Performance management
2. How well we are doing it – Audits
3. What difference we are making – Outcomes for children and young people

4. How much are we doing - Performance Management:

The performance reports and datasets available to Worcestershire Children First Fostering provide a clear line of sight on practice from the Lead Member and DCS and throughout our Managers and Practitioners. We have several reports and dashboards that enable our staff to understand practice, celebrate achievements and target areas for improvement. We want the experience of children and young people and their carers to be positive. As a minimum this means doing what we say we will do in the timescales we are expected to do it.

Key Performance Indicators

Measure	In time / Completed	Out of time / Not Completed	Percentage	Indicator
Support Visits in Time	-	-		
Unannounced Visits in Time	211	24	86	●
Annual Review in Time	185	60	75	●
Latest Formal Supervision in last 12 weeks	166	79	67	●
Latest Management Supervision in last 12 weeks	217	28	88	●
Training Support & Development	181	64	73	●
Covid-19 KIT Call in last 4 weeks	29	216	11	●
Notification received within 1 day in last 6 months	80	64	55	●

We want to ensure that children and young people receive appropriate services to support them to achieve positive outcomes. A summary of these reports:

<p>Foster Carer Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Live' data available of both Mainstream & Kinship Carers in line with The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (31) 	<p>Foster Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key data of children placed within WCF Placements
<p>Foster Carer Dashboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main performance indicators at overall and service & team level 	<p>Foster Carer Recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key indicators in respect of enquiries, assessments, reg 24 placements

5. How well are we doing it – Audits:

This section describes our audit arrangements. These arrangements are intended to ensure that the standards are being met and positive outcomes are being achieved for children and young people.

5.1 Case File Audits

WCF Fostering Services undertake a quarterly programme of Case File Audits, cases for audit are identified by the Quality Assurance Service using the Foster Carer Register and are circulated to the relevant managers and senior managers on the 1st of each month.

The audit is conducted by two auditors, the first auditor is the case responsible Team Manager – they are known as the Lead Auditor. The second auditor is known as the Peer Auditor and will be another Team Manager within the service. The Peer Auditor is encouraged to seek the views of the child or young person, their birth parent and their foster carer(s) when completing a Case File Audit unless this is not possible. The Peer Auditor also have a case discussion with the Supervising Social Worker to gain their views on the child's circumstances and our involvement.



In these audits, the Peer Auditor will seek the views of the Fostering Social Worker and will also seek Service User Feedback from Foster/Kinship Carers; the questions are specific to the Fostering Service. The Audits are also specific to the Fostering Service and Regulations, the Audits specifically look at:

- Voice of the Child
- Support & Supervision to the Carer
- Safer Caring Plans & Risk Assessments
- Quality of Matching
- Approval, Annual Reviews, Panel & ADM
- Management Oversight

The Audit Tool includes an Action Plan which is followed up by the Case Responsible Team Leader to ensure any recommendations are completed, the manager is also responsible for sharing the outcome learning with the allocated worker. These audits are Moderated by the Senior Managers in the Fostering once completed to agree the final grades and learning. The outcome of an audit is recorded in the Fostering Audit Form on Liquid Logic Carers Record by Safeguarding Quality Assurance.

The Advanced Social Work Practitioners Team reviews cases eight weeks after the audit is moderated to ensure actions are completed and will footprint this on the carers file, evidencing how we have closed the loop on our individual case learning.

Learning is collated and presented in a Quarterly Quality Assurance Report; this learning is also shared through Newsletters, Briefings and Learning Presentations.

5.2 Targeted Audits:

Targeted Audits look at specific areas of practice and impact. Topics for targeted audits are identified by relevant Group Managers/Assistant Directors linked to issues being identified through supervision, complaints, or Service Dashboard indicators. All Targeted Audits outcomes and learning are recorded on the Targeted Audit Template and sent to Safeguarding Quality Assurance; these are saved centrally, and the learning captured within the Quarterly Quality Assurance Report. Group Managers are responsible for ensuring the targeted learning is disseminated with their Team Manager Group to embed learning.

6. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People:

This section describes our approach to gathering the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers, so we can understand the impact of our services, areas of practice to celebrate and areas for improvement.

6.1 Audits

The peer auditor will contact the Foster Carers, Birth Parents, and child/young person in placement, and seek their feedback using the questions within the audit template – this is pulled into Quarterly Feedback reports.

6.2 Targeted Feedback

We seek feedback from children, young people, birth parents and carers through a quarterly programme of feedback.



Children & Young People:

Fostering & Kinship Social Workers seek feedback from children & young people in WCF Placements throughout the year, however, they use specific feedback forms at the point of the Annual Review. Our Annual Review Forms have been updated to seek additional feedback from children & young people. Social Workers will obtain this feedback and once completed will upload to Liquid Logic/Annual Review Documents following normal process. However, the specific feedback questions will be also inputted into a Survey Form...this will enable us to produce quarterly reports of strengths and areas of focus/improvement on the service and how children experience our services and care. Other examples of direct work will be included in the quarterly reports...demonstrating the wider direct work undertaken.

Mainstream & Kinship Carers:

Across each month, BSOs/Admin in the Fostering & Kinship Service will contact carers to seek their feedback on their experiences of our services, the BSO/Admin will record this on the Foster Carers Record using the Form "[Foster Carer Service User Feedback](#)" and will use section 1 to record the carers views. There is a minimum requirement of each BSO/Admin seeking 2 pieces of feedback each across a month from Carers. The form will ask whether this is a mainstream or kinship placement, to enable us to identify themes for the different cohort of carers.

Birth Parents:

Across each month, BSOs/Admin in the Fostering & Kinship Service will contact birth parents to seek their feedback on their experiences of our services and the care our placements provide to their children, the BSO/Admin will record this on the Foster Carers Record using the Form "[Foster Carer Service User Feedback](#)" and will use section 2 to record the parent's views. There is a minimum requirement of each BSO/Admin seeking 2 pieces of feedback each across a month from parents. The form will ask whether this is a mainstream or kinship placement, to enable us to identify themes for the different cohort of carers.

6.3 Learning from Compliments and Complaints:

It is a requirement of Children's Act 1989 and National Health Service Act 1990 for local authorities to establish a procedure for representations for complaints, compliments, or comments. The statutory complaints procedure can be used by service users, carers, or their representatives. Compliments are accepted from external sources. This includes service users, parents, carers, and other organisations. Guidance on WCF Complaints Procedures can be found at: [Foster and kinship carers important documents | Foster and kinship carers important documents | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The link to make a Complaint can be found here:

[Children's Social Care - Make a Compliment, Comment or a Complaint | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The Consumer Relations Officer offers help and advice to staff about the process through training sessions. Advice to staff about the handling of complaints is provided when/if required.

Advocacy services are available to support Children and Young People wishing to make a complaint – this service is commissioned by WCF and is provided by Coram Voice.

Information is collated from complaints and compliments for Quarterly and Annual Reports with an overview by the Registered Manager.

Specific learning is shared through the Principal Social Worker Newsletter and issues relating to individual staff capability or competency will be taken up by the relevant line manager through

supervision or when necessary other formal processes. Complaints are tracked jointly between Senior Managers and CRU in a joint tracker.

7. Workforce Development

Our workforce is our most valuable-asset in successfully delivering services that make a positive difference for our families in Worcestershire. We strive to be the ‘employer of choice’ for children’s services staff, and we approach this through a culture that values the impact that our staff have in improving children’s lives. We have high expectations and have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued and can flourish.

As a company our overall aim is to build a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward in these challenging times, to develop our staff, give them clear career pathways, and provide them with the leadership, skills, and knowledge they need now and, in the future, to deliver excellent services to the children, young people their families & carers in Worcestershire.

Our Workforce Vision ensures that, as a service, we continue to have strong front-line management and that we have the capacity and ability to flex in response to changes that are inevitable, whilst keeping a good level of stability and quality. Our strategy will be managed and monitored through our WCF Workforce Board and is supported by financial investment and through staff feedback and performance reviews. Our Workforce Strategy has five key priorities, they are:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Recruitment & Retention
- Diversity & Culture
- Leadership & Management
- Building Skills for the Future

8. Governance

There are a range of Governance Structures over Early Help Quality Assurance in Worcestershire Children First, these are:

8.1 WCF Fostering Improvement

Following the 2021 Inspection of WCFF, a robust Improvement Plan has been developed and implemented to improve services in-line with the recommendations.

8.2 Ofsted

Ofsted is the regulatory body that has responsibility for the inspection of Worcestershire Children First Fostering.

These inspections will consider key aspects of a child’s journey through the social care system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person and the effectiveness of the help and protection they are offered. The inspections are intended to identify areas of strength and for further development.

8.3 Self-Evaluation Framework

Worcestershire is committed to the production of an annual self-assessment as part of its learning cycle. This process enables the organisation to understand the progress being made over a 12-month period and to inform its annual business planning cycle. Our Self Evaluation Cycle will commence in April and the final report will be produced in September each year.



8.4 Overview and Scrutiny

The role of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is to provide challenge to support service improvement and sustaining this improvement. The group forms part of the governance arrangements within the Council and receives performance information via a Dashboard on the key information to enable it to provide support and challenge.

8.4 Corporate Parenting Board

Data is generally provided to the Corporate Parenting Board as part of thematic reports presented by managers. This allows the Board to look in more detail at specific aspects of the Council's work with looked after children, with context and analysis included as part of the report.

8.5 Worcestershire Children First Board:

As a wholly owned Council Company, WCF has a contractual relationship with Worcestershire County Council to provide statutory children's services. These contractual arrangements, between Council and Company, are overseen by a Quarterly Review Board and a Performance and Commissioning Group to ensure contract compliance, within the terms of reference of the Company Board.

The WCF board consists of 12 Executive and Non-Executive Directors with a wealth of public sector expertise in supporting families and communities. Executive Directors are those employed by WCF to lead and manage delivery functions and teams, whilst Non-Executive Directors do not have responsibility for day-to-day operations but provide input and challenge via Board meetings and sub-board meetings throughout the year. To maintain rigour, WCF's internal governance takes the form of monthly WCF Board meetings (with an Annual General Meeting and every third Board meeting held in public when conditions allow). Additionally, there are two subgroups reporting into the Board of Directors focusing on improvement of services.

9. Review of the Framework:

This Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and amended accordingly.

Tina Russell
Chief Executive WCF & DCS

Date: May 2022