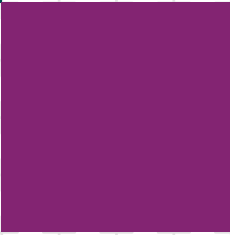




Fostering Wellbeing programme update

All Wales pilot 2019-23



About Fostering Wellbeing

Fostering Wellbeing is an innovative programme, funded by Welsh Government and delivered by The Fostering Network.

Fostering Wellbeing is designed from the perspective of a child's journey through care and the relationships they build. It uses The Fostering Network's position as the leading fostering charity to deliver a multi-agency programme across social services, health and education.

Fostering Wellbeing brings together all the professionals involved in supporting children who are looked after, including foster carers. It promotes equality of status for everyone involved in the 'team around the child'. Fostering Wellbeing encourages professionals to work together, with a focus on improving wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. It creates a shared language for professionals, bringing people together and sharing best practice across service boundaries with an aim to embed a shared approach.

Aims of Fostering Wellbeing

Fostering Wellbeing aims to improve the wellbeing and educational outcomes for care experienced children in Wales. It is designed for professionals working with children who are looked after. Specifically, the programme aims to:

1. Identify and share the core values and principles which help children and young people who are looked after to thrive
2. Develop skills and competencies in common which help equip children and young people who are looked after to fulfil their potential
3. Become confident in a shared and consistent approach to meeting the needs of children and young people who are looked after which, in turn, will fire ambition and help them find success
4. Be active advocates for the children and young people for whom they have a responsibility, be it individual or corporate.

'I now feel more confident in my role as a foster carer and have the confidence to speak up having received this knowledge and understanding of the issues involved.'

Foster carer

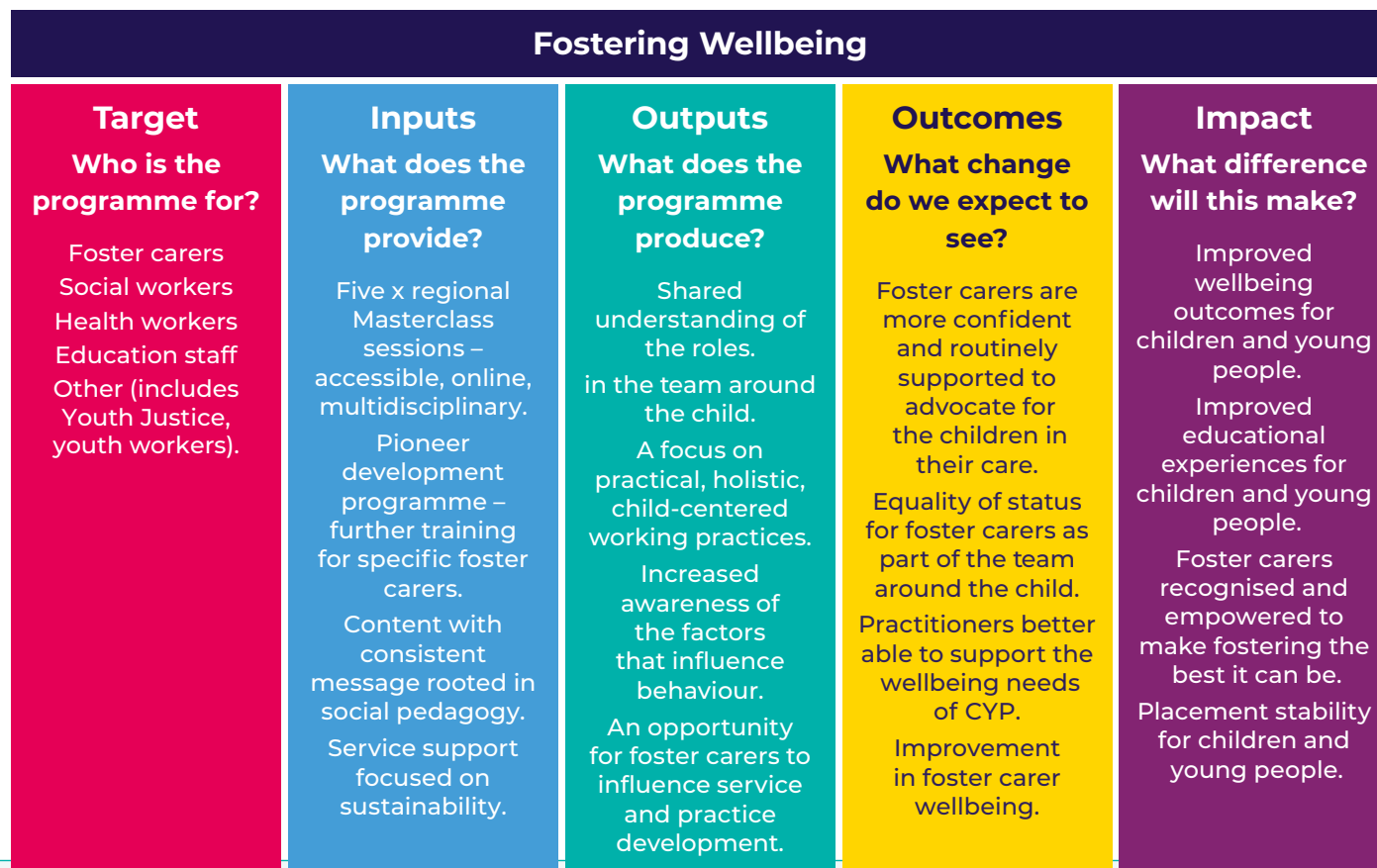
Summary

Following the success of the Cwm Taf regional pilot, run from 2017-19, Welsh Government committed to funding a further three-year pilot programme to be rolled out across Wales with a focus on regional delivery.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the face-to-face delivery plan for the masterclasses was paused, and the delivery team used the time to revise and adapt the masterclass materials so that they could be delivered virtually. Regional engagement work across social care, health and education services was also completed during this time.

Virtual delivery of the regional masterclasses started in January 2021, with the aim to deliver five rounds of masterclasses within each region in Wales.

A proposal for a one-year extension was granted in March 2022 to account for the initial delay in the delivery schedule caused by the pandemic and to allow for the full completion of the programme delivery plan.



'It was excellent. Interesting as I was involved in the first pilot which was delivered in person. Advantages and disadvantages to both but the content is still excellent.'

Foster carer



Social pedagogy – what is it?

Social pedagogy is an academic discipline that forms the bedrock of social care in much of Europe and Scandinavia.

Evidence has shown that a social pedagogic approach to foster care can provide an ethical and theoretical framework which enhances and builds on existing practice. Through supporting the development of improved relationships, social pedagogy can provide important wellbeing benefits for children and young people, their foster carers, and the other professionals in the team around them.

Social pedagogy can help children and young people in foster care to have a positive experience of family life, with deeper, more trusting and equal relationships, where foster carers are better able to understand their needs.

Fostering Wellbeing was developed using the principle that you do not need to be an expert on social pedagogy to understand the concept and implement the principles into your working practice.

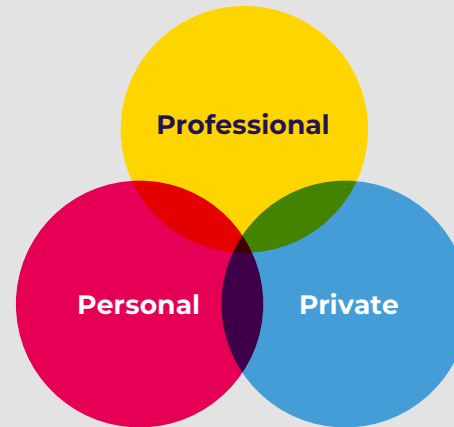
Social pedagogy toolkit

Fostering Wellbeing uses the following social pedagogy concepts to give participants a toolkit they can use to work together and support children and young people.

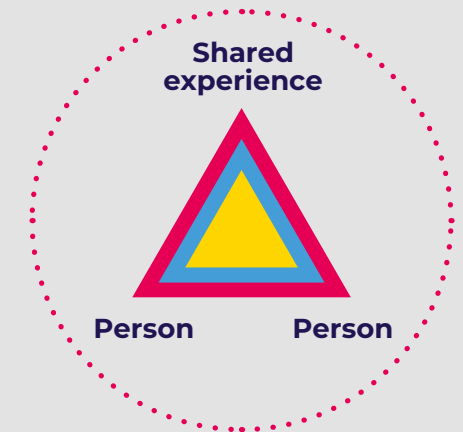
'I really enjoyed the learning zone and common third discussions and ideas. I also find the breakout rooms enjoyable and great to meet others, and hear others' ideas and stories.'

Foster carer

Three Ps: supporting the balance between the professional, personal, and private self



Common third: shared activities to develop stronger relationships



Learning zone: understanding how the learning zone helps us develop and grow



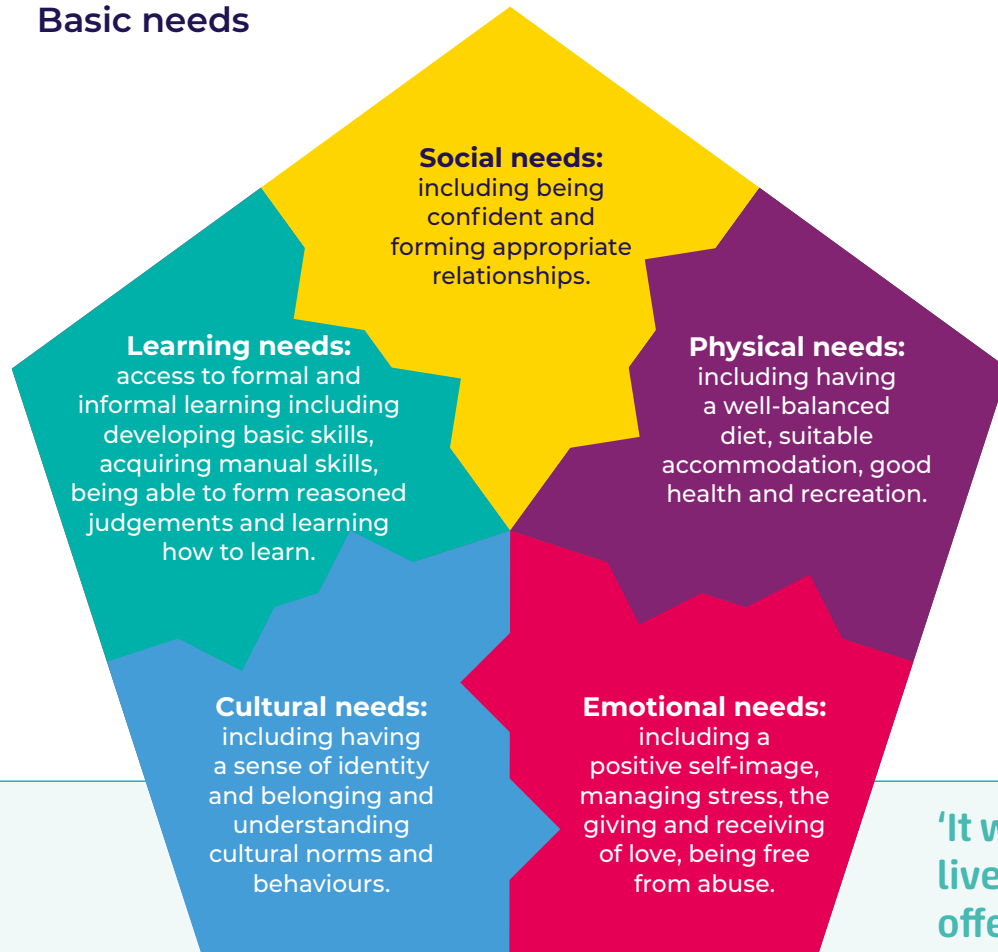
Four Fs: a model for reflecting on challenges and planning for the future

<p>Facts</p> <p>An objective description of what has happened</p>	<p>Feelings</p> <p>A description of the feelings connected to the facts</p>
<p>Findings</p> <p>What sense can we make of the facts and feelings? What do we learn from looking at both?</p>	<p>Future</p> <p>What can we put into action? What can we do better or differently next time?</p>

Wellbeing: a working definition

In the Fostering Wellbeing programme, we seek a holistic approach to wellbeing which can be considered in terms of what a person needs to be comfortable, healthy, and happy. In this broad sense, wellbeing is when a person's basic needs are being met.

Basic needs



The 10 wellbeing principles

1. All the child's needs have to be met – it is essential to understand and respond to the whole child or young person to improve their wellbeing.
2. Each person's view of life and the wider world will differ, arising from their background, experiences and own mindset.
3. What has happened cannot be undone but can be understood and provide lessons for the future.
4. Encouraging aspiration and ambition is essential in the development of positive attitudes.
5. Good relationships are at the centre of a person's wellbeing.
6. Those working with a child or young person being looked after need to know the difference between the behaviours of the professional self, personal self and private self and in what situations the appropriate behaviour applies.
7. Positive values and attitudes are best nurtured through practical activities shared between child/young person and carer.
8. Learning to help oneself is just as important as learning to build relationships with others.
9. The shared values and attitudes of all those involved with a child or young person being looked after need to be made explicit and underpin decisions about their wellbeing.
10. All those involved with a child or young person being looked after, including foster carers and the child/young person, have equality of status in the relationship.

'It was useful to consider the needs of everyone involved in the lives of the children we care for. Having a holistic approach helps offer a sense of belonging, and the need to be equally involved in prioritising the voice and meeting the needs of the child.'

Foster carer

How the Fostering Wellbeing programme is delivered

Masterclasses

Regional delivery of five themed masterclasses delivered to multi-disciplinary members working in the team around the child (social care, health, education, and external services including youth justice).

Each masterclass focuses on two of the Fostering Wellbeing principles, featuring a range of regionally recruited guest speakers, interactive activities, breakout rooms and a focus on reflective practice.

The masterclasses aim to achieve a co-productive learning experience for foster carers and their co-professionals. Through these interactive sessions, everyone will be encouraged to share their experiences and the different perspectives of each role. As a result, over the five masterclasses, participants feedback shows that they have gained a deeper understanding and respect of each other's role.

A strong theme in feedback from delegates was the importance of working together and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Masterclass 1: Knowing and meeting needs

A child's every need must be met, and recognising that each person's view of life and the wider world will differ.

Masterclass 2: Living and growing

Lessons for the future and encouraging aspiration and ambition.

Masterclass 3: Me, you, us and them

Building good relationships and appropriate behaviour.

Masterclass 4: Hands on

Positive values and attitudes are best nurtured through practical activities.

Masterclass 5: Working as one

Shared values and attitudes, and equality of status of all those involved with a child/young person being looked after.

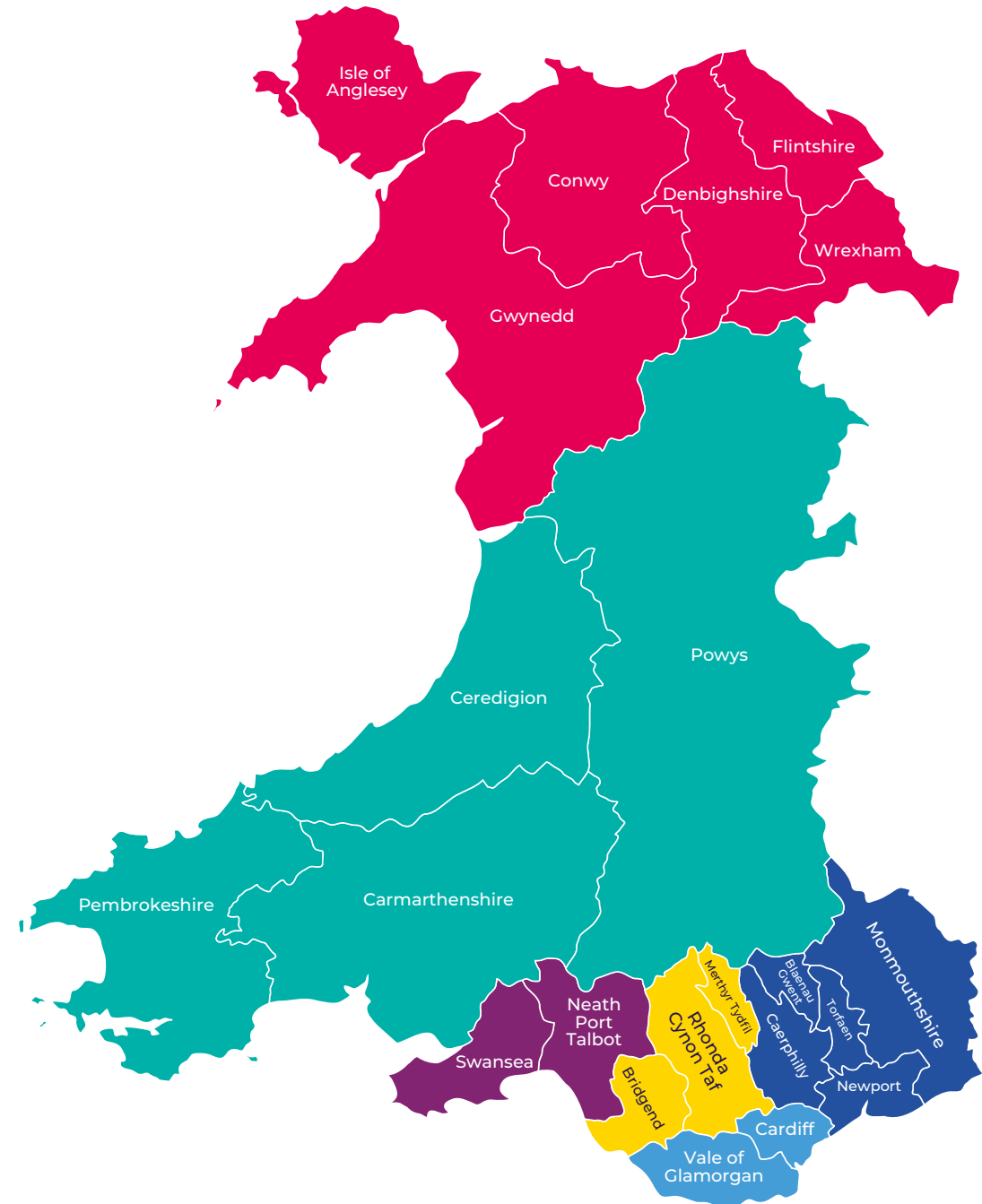
'Through all of the masterclasses was this need for us all to work together. That was the big underlying message for me that we're all key components in a young person's life. But it's working together that we make a difference, not working in isolation. And I think that was quite a powerful message that came through really.'

Co-professional

Regional working across Wales

Fostering Wellbeing has worked on a regional basis with teams across Wales. This has included working closely with the Foster Wales structure and the Regional Development Managers.

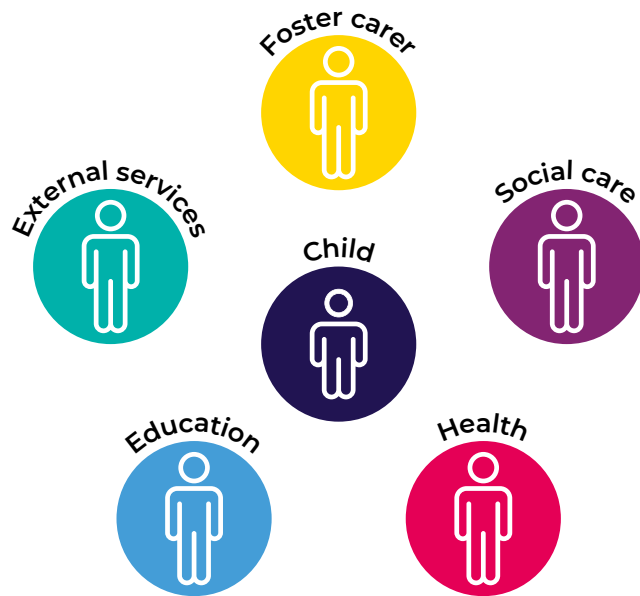
Region	Local Authorities
North Wales	Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire
Mid and West Wales	Ceredigion Powys, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire
West Glamorgan	Swansea, Neath Port Talbot
Gwent	Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Caerphilly, Torfaen
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	Rhonda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend
Cardiff and Vale	Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan



Fostering Wellbeing stakeholders

Fostering Wellbeing is a multidisciplinary approach and we have engaged with stakeholders and services that make up the 'Team around the child' as both Masterclass participants and guest speakers.

The team around the child



Learning hours and attendees

Delivered **166** masterclasses

8,372 learning hours across Wales

3,350 attendees

70% foster carers and kinship carers

17% social care

13% education and health

Speakers for the programme included:

- Foster carer
- Social worker
- Teacher
- Educational psychologist
- Emotion coaching specialist
- Play therapist
- Speech and language therapist
- Head of children's service
- Looked after children's nurse
- Looked after children in education co-ordinator.

Foster carers felt that their views as members of the team were more valued as a result of this multi-disciplinary approach.

'I think it's given me a feeling of being more part of a team... what I think means just as much as what they think.'

Foster carer

'I just thought that it was one of the best ones I've ever been on. I just remember thinking, "Wow, if only all training could be like this".'

Foster carer

Pioneers

Fostering Wellbeing pioneers are experienced foster carers and co-professionals who have attended the masterclasses, who in addition to the skills and experience they will bring to the role, will receive training and support to help them cascade the learning from the masterclasses within their service.

The pioneer development programme launched in November 2021. A series of five development sessions have been offered to any identified pioneers within each region:

- introduction to the Fostering Wellbeing pioneers
- peer mentoring
- team around the child
- empowering others
- looking after you.

Some activities a Fostering Wellbeing pioneer might undertake include:

Peer support: acting as a focal point for foster carers to help them understand and maximise their role in supporting children and young people's wellbeing. This might include sharing information about Fostering Wellbeing at a support group or a Skills to Foster™ course.

Championing and advocacy: working with services and other professionals to help them engage with the project aims. This could include twilight sessions at schools or attending meetings to share their experience of the Fostering Wellbeing Programme.

Supporting service change: work proactively with fostering services to identify new ways of working together to improve the wellbeing of children looked after.

'It was useful to talk about our need for peer support as foster carers. It would be so helpful to have other carers to call on for support or to meet up sometimes – fostering can be quite isolating.'

Foster carer

'It's one of the slickest online training events I've been on. I've been on a few, with fostering and with my normal day job. The way it was run, it was so slick. The housekeeping of it was amazing.'

Foster carer

Pioneer activity in Wales

Local, regional and national opportunities have been created for the pioneers.

At a local level, we are working with individual local authorities to develop the pioneer role to meet the needs of the local fostering service and community. The role is managed by the local authority and designed to be flexible so that the identified skills and experiences of each pioneer can be utilised and nurtured in the most effective way.

A number of regional pioneer groups have been formed. This is an opportunity to continue the regional approach of the programme, it supports networking and relationship building of pioneers within the region. We are working closely with the regional development managers to look at potential opportunities for each regional group of pioneers working together.

A series of national events have been created to give pioneers an opportunity to network with their pioneer peers across Wales. They will hear from a range of guest speakers on topics that have been identified by the pioneers and be part of a national consultation to feed into the development of a consistent fostering experience throughout Wales. They will regularly feedback about their experiences and the sustainability of the pioneer role going forward.

Local

Pioneers are asked to sit on the corporate parenting board, representing the role of the foster carer for the local authority.

Pioneers taking a role in the recruitment and training of new foster carers, introducing themselves as a pioneer and a peer mentor.

Pioneer peer mentoring roles, supporting the national commitment from Foster Wales to have a peer mentoring scheme in each local authority across Wales.

Pioneers attending and supporting foster carer recruitment events.

Pioneers supporting the delivery of training.

Regional

Good practice regional group examples

Networking with their peer pioneers from the region.

Sharing good practice and experiences.

Creating a Wellbeing Padlet resource for foster carers.

Developing a pioneer handbook to create consistency for the role.

Attending and organising regional events.

Contributing to regional plans and workstreams.

Examples of our programme of national events

Emotion coaching

Creative ways to communicate

Reflective practice and practical mentoring

Christmas party

Foster Wales Consultation

Reframing allegations

Compassion Fatigue and self care

End of year celebration

CASCADE evaluation

Fostering Wellbeing has been evaluated by CASCADE which has published a series of findings, as well as considering the impact and potential of the programme itself.

Findings:

Quality of provision:

- The masterclasses commenced face-to-face but were stopped due to Covid lockdown restrictions. During the initial lockdown phase, the masterclasses were honed, recalibrated and regionalised so that they could be delivered online, and represent an excellent example of effective virtual delivery.
- The delivery team attended social pedagogy training during the initial lockdown period and this has been embedded far more clearly within the content.
- The content has been overwhelmingly well received and is supported by a range of handouts and supplementary materials. The content is much improved on the 2019 pilot.

- The facilitation is experienced as engaging and interactive. The skill and passion of the facilitators has been positively commented on.
- The online delivery has made attendance much more feasible for busy foster carers and co-professionals.

Benefits of multi-disciplinary involvement:

- The presentations by heads of service have been widely commented on and are seen to give the training gravitas and endorsement.
- The masterclasses have drawn upon speakers who are experts from a wide range of disciplines working with children looked after, including speech and language; these have been particularly well received. Many of the speakers are local, as masterclasses are bespoke to each region.
- The multi-disciplinary nature of the training is highly valued. Increased respect among team members is reported.

'Where new foster carers come into the system, and they need a lot more support, if we can help and guide people, obviously we've been there, we've experienced it. I think there's a big part to play in supporting new foster carers coming in.'

Foster carer

'It suddenly made me realise my experiences are worth something, and if I can help somebody else not go through the negative part of a process on their own, like allegations and things like that, if I can walk through with someone and help them, then I just think what a gift that's gonna be to other foster carers.'

Foster carer

CASCADE evaluation

Impact of the programme so far:

- The main messages of the importance of bringing the foster carer in to the team around the child and related decision making has been received and taken on board. Delegates reported that both education and foster carers are now routinely included in meetings around the child.
- There are many examples of the skills and learning being taken into practice and forming the basis of discussion between foster carers and practitioners in the field.
- Delegates reported increased levels of empathy for children and more trauma informed approaches have been adopted.
- Delegates have a strong sense of the underpinning ethos of social pedagogy and the notion of working with the whole child. Much of the learning and understanding of the importance of children's prior experiences have also been retained.

- The programme has embedded a clear understanding of the role of the corporate parent as being everyone's responsibility.
- Foster carers have felt empowered to become stronger advocates for the children in their care and have been able to provide us with many examples of this.

Considerations for improvement:

- There have been fewer speakers who are care experienced than in the previous pilot.
- Online working provides fewer opportunities for networking.
- Co-professionals have not attended the masterclasses as extensively as was hoped, especially those from education and health. Where they have attended, many did not attend all five sessions.

Conclusion: Fostering Wellbeing is an effective way of promoting social pedagogy, wellbeing and the team around the child, mirroring governmental priorities.

'It is good to see so many people come together and share various experiences. The presentations have been of excellent quality plus the regional facilitators were very welcoming and experienced.'

Co-professional

Recommendations

CASCADE have made 20 recommendations for Welsh Government to consider. Key to these recommendations is that:

'A longer-term commitment to the programme would provide sustainability and enable authorities to embed the learning from Fostering Wellbeing'.

CASCADE recommend that the masterclasses continue to be delivered, online, and to a regional audience. Members of the team around the child should be encouraged or directed to attend, with increased input from those with care experience.

CASCADE have also made recommendations about the logistics of delivering the Masterclass programme including: securing dates well in advance, reducing the amount of time recapping the programme principles, increasing reflection time, and adding more information on the new Curriculum for Wales.

Conclusion

There is clearly scope to continue the masterclasses and to engage a higher percentage of the foster care workforce, fostering teams and childcare social workers, and colleagues from education and health across Wales. As per the recommendations, the programme could be extended to residential workers, those caring for children under SGO arrangements, and parents who have recently adopted.

At both local and regional levels, the pioneer role could grow and develop to support with activities such as:

- recruitment, acting as 'recruitment champions'
- more robust peer support for new carers or as part of a wrap-around service for those fostering children as a step-down from residential
- masterclass delivery or delivery of shorter sessions for multi-disciplinary teams within health and education.

It would also support Welsh Government's elimination of profit workplan as the pioneers develop a focus on supporting placement stability within local authority services.

'I'm fiercely protective for the children in my care, I will continue to do my best but when feeling despondent, I'm going to keep going as today has reconfirmed the important role we play and the changes we make.'

Foster carer

'I now feel more confident in my role as a foster carer and have the confidence to speak up having received this knowledge and understanding of the issues involved.'

Foster carer

**The
Fostering
Network**
**Y
Rhwydwaith
Maethu**

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of children in foster care.

We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all children and young people in foster care experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

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