Support Care Policy and Procedures Guidelines
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Foreword

I am pleased that the Fostering Network Wales is able to support fostering service providers through the development of this guidance. Support care is an effective form of foster care that strengthens families and is very much about prevention and development of sustainable change in families. Foster carers come from a whole range of backgrounds and experiences and support care is an ideal way for committed people to make a difference to a child’s life even if they cannot offer support full time.

It is very heartening to see schemes develop and hear of the difference that support carers make to children’s lives. I look forward to seeing further schemes develop across Wales. We are grateful to Rhonwyn Dobbing for her support in writing this guidance.

Freda Lewis
Director, the Fostering Network Wales
Introduction

1.1 Most families have their ups and downs when the pressures of family life appear to be overwhelming. In these situations parents can usually call on relatives or friends for assistance or a break from daily pressures. However this support is not available to all families and they may turn to or be referred to their local Social Services department for assistance.

1.2 Support care is a preventative family support service which is designed to provide families who are experiencing difficulties in caring for their children with some time out or respite. It is a time limited service [typically up to nine months] which is provided as part of a plan to prevent family breakdown and avoid children becoming looked after on a long term basis. It should not be confused with a short break service for disabled children or with longer term respite for special guardians or adoptive families; support care could however be used by these families if and when they are experiencing specific difficulties. The objective of support care is to provide support for families and children in addressing their difficulties and not merely to provide a break.

1.3 It is essential that all professionals are clear about the purpose of the service and that this clarity is shared with parents and children together with the expectation that they will work positively with social workers and support carers to address their difficulties. Assessment and care planning are key components of the service. The assessment should provide enough information to identify and analyse family difficulties and lead to a plan of intervention - such as a Child in Need (CiN) or Looked After Child (LAC) plan - which identifies actions to deliver positive outcomes.

1.4 Placements therefore should not be allowed to drift but should be routinely monitored to maintain the dynamic of the service and ensure that progress is being made and the identified outcomes are being achieved.

“The objective of support care is to provide support for families and children in addressing their difficulties and not merely to provide a break.”
1.5 In a study of support care published in 2004 undertaken by Margaret Greenfield and June Statham they found that:

‘Although there was little ‘hard’ evidence of effectiveness because of a lack of monitoring or comparative studies, the available evidence suggests that providing short breaks for children in need helps them to remain with their families and may avoid longer-term care. The service is highly valued by parents, and its flexibility is a particular strength. Short breaks can also provide continuity and stability for children when used alongside periods of accommodation.’

Established support care schemes report that typically in only 2 out of 100 situations where support care is provided is it overtaken by longer term care. Louise Roberts from Cardiff University is currently carrying out a 3 year qualitative study into outcomes for families in receipt of support care. Lisa Holmes from Loughborough University has conducted a study into unit costs for support care. Both pieces of research are available from The Fostering Network Wales Strengthening Families Support Care Project.

1.6 Support care is provided by foster carers who are approved by a local authority or an independent fostering provider and are assessed and trained specifically to undertake this work. The foster carer assessment offers a more in depth assessment than that conducted with child minders and this is important, given the expectations of the carer and the responsibilities they carry.

1.7 As well as helping families in crisis, support care can assist in reunification plans with families; extra support for kinship care; after care support for care leavers; support for young parents formerly in the care system; working with children excluded from school, working with adoptive families, etc.

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2. Legal Framework

2.1 As previously indicated, support care is a family support service and as such is provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a service to Children in Need. However, if a child is placed with a foster carer for longer than 24 hours, they then become Looked After (Section 20) and are subject to Looked After Child (LAC) regulations and requirements. When delivering support care, most authorities apply a simplified version of LAC requirements. However, when setting up a scheme and considering what should apply to support care, legal advice should be sought. The challenge is to achieve an appropriate balance; it is important not to undermine parents’ responsibilities but at the same time to promote the child or young person’s safety and ensure the effectiveness of the plan.

2.2 A CiN or LAC plan should be in place together with a placement plan if the child stays longer than 24 hours. A decision should be made as to whether a Personal Education Plan and a Health Plan should also be in place depending on the needs of the individual child or young person. Written information about the child or young person must be provided to the carer. The placement may not be long enough to require the application of Independent Review Regulations and the required agenda for these reviews may not be relevant. However, it is important that there is some system in place to monitor the placement to assess whether or not the proposed outcomes are likely to be achieved and to assure the local authority that the child or young person is safely and appropriately placed.

For example, if a child is placed with a support carer for two weekends per month over a 9-month period, reviews of progress against the CiN or LAC plan should take place every 6 weeks.

2.3 Fostering Regulations will also apply to support care schemes which will also be subject to inspection [see Appendix 1: Hints and Tips on Setting Up and Delivering Support Care].
3. Practice Issues

3.1 An assessment of the child and family should be carried out in line with the requirements of the Assessment Framework. A placement plan which identifies a support care placement as part of the overall CIN or LAC plan for the child should also be established. It is unlikely that the placement alone will resolve all of the family’s problems and some additional services (e.g. counselling, advice, parenting programmes, anger management programme) will be provided to achieve the identified outcomes.

3.2 Following the assessment, the analysis of evidence, the compilation of a placement plan, agreement that a support care placement is appropriate and that the eligibility criteria for placement is met, an appropriate placement should be sought.

3.3 Once all parties (the child or young person, parents and carers) are in agreement a planning meeting should be held involving all the aforementioned people together with the carers, their social worker and the child or young person’s social worker.

3.4 The meeting, which should ideally be chaired by a manager, should set out and clarify the following;

- The purpose and expectations of the placement
- Information sharing about difficulties
- The contribution the support care placement will make to the overall plan for the child and family
- Responsibilities of support carer[s], child, parent[s] and social workers
- Agreed activities and support for the child/young person
- Timescale for the placement and agreement on frequency and length of child/young person’s visits
- When the review of the plan will take place and how placement will be monitored.

"It is unlikely that the placement alone will resolve all of the family’s problems and some additional services will be provided to achieve the identified outcomes."
3.5 A risk assessment should be in place before the child or young person is placed.

3.6 At the end of the placement there should be a discussion about the placement; identifying what has been achieved and if anything was problematic. Any learning from the placement should inform the development of the service and where appropriate inform the review of the support carer.
The Organisation and Management of Support Care

4.1 Introduction

It is important to decide where the support care scheme is located. Most authorities place them within the Fostering Service. It could be argued that the scheme is best placed within the Family Support service or team. This would ensure its accessibility and prevent support carers being diverted into other fostering tasks. It would also promote its ethos as a family support service and provide additional opportunities for training and service development. Supervision and access to training and advice from the fostering service should be available to the social worker if the family support service is responsible for the scheme.

Written information about support care should be available not only to potential carers, children and parents but also to social workers and other professionals working with vulnerable families.

It should be clear about the fact that the service is time limited and is a support service which seeks to assist a child with their difficulties and support parents in their parenting role. It should not be seen as a treat for the child or young person or as a relief from parenting by their parents. The literature should promote the service as a preventative, family support service.

4.2 Recruitment, Training, Assessment and Support

4.2.1 Recruitment

Research demonstrates that support carers are usually very busy people who work full time or part time and are interested in working with children and young people but do not have the time to commit to
fostering on a full time basis. They are often working in related caring professions including teaching, nursing, care work and indeed social services. They often have children of their own who are grown up and have moved out of the family home and there is now some space available to care for a child. An exception to this are older experienced foster carers who are reaching retirement but are still committed to fostering and would like to continue albeit on a more limited basis. Recruitment therefore needs to be focused on these groups of people who have the necessary skills and experience to relate to and work with children and who can work in partnership with birth parents/primary carers, offering support without undermining them and making them feel inadequate.

4.2.2 Training
Similarly training has to be specialised to the fostering task. Some of the modules on the *Skills to Foster* training course will be relevant but carers will need additional training, eg. in dealing with challenging behaviour, principles of partnership working with parents, etc. The Fostering Network Wales has adapted the *Skills to Foster* pre-approval training course specifically for support carers. It has also developed a comprehensive package of post approval training [see Appendix 2 – *Training Flyer*].

Training needs to be delivered at times and venues to suit the needs of support carers, bearing in mind that research\(^2\) shows 80% of them work outside the home, usually full-time. Typically training should be offered during twilight sessions, evenings and weekends.

Training should take into consideration the fact that many support carers will already be receiving similar training (eg. in child protection) through their employers.

4.2.3 Assessment
The assessment of support carers must identify their capacity to provide the service and their completed assessment should be considered by the fostering panel, members of whom should have some training to understand the particular challenges of support care.

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\(^2\) *Support Care The Preventative Face of Foster Care* by Philippa Padbury: The Fostering Network (2007)
The Fostering Network Wales provides a training session specifically for panel members who are approving and reviewing support carers.

4.2.4 Support

In order for the scheme to grow and develop there should ideally be a dedicated support worker who will be available to visit carers regularly, and when a child is in placement and who can review the success or otherwise of the placement.

Support groups should be established for support carers. Carers providing support care often indicate that they prefer to meet as a dedicated group, as opposed to with mainstream foster carers offering full-time placements. As with training, these groups need to take into account support carers’ other roles and should be held at times and venues to suit. Support carers report that they appreciate a training and information sharing angle to their support groups.
5. Case Study

Daniel is 13 years old and is currently on a fixed term exclusion following an incident when he deliberately scratched a teacher’s car after being reprimanded for fighting.

Daniel is the youngest of 3 children; Cerys is 19 and is a university student, Mark is 16 and has muscular dystrophy and is a wheelchair user. Mark attends the same school as Daniel and is considered to be an excellent student, bright, articulate and academically very able. He has a 121 assistant at school to help with his personal care and manage the school environment. This is in stark contrast to Daniel who hates school, truants and is struggling with school work. Daniel’s parents Julie and Dave have focused a lot of attention on Mark because of the nature of his disability and his limited life span. Dave is a long distance lorry driver and is often away from home.

The relationship between Daniel and Mark is difficult. Mark tends to “boss” Daniel and “tells tales” about his many and varied misdemeanours. Daniel retreats to his room where he spends most of his time, eating meals there. Julie and Mark spend the evenings together watching television, playing computer games etc.

The family is in crisis following an incident when Julie asked Daniel to help her transfer Mark from his wheelchair to an armchair; Mark hates using the hoist and his mother will therefore lift him but she has injured her back in the process. During the incident Mark irritates Daniel and calls him stupid and clumsy so Daniel retaliates by pushing him out of the wheelchair onto the floor. Julie is distraught and screams at Daniel telling him to get out. She subsequently rings the local GP practice and the local Children’s Team becomes involved together with Mark’s Disability Social Worker. Julie, Mark and Daniel are all shaken by this experience and Julie’s loss of control.

An assessment is undertaken and a plan drawn up which is accepted after some discussion and negotiation by all the family. It involves;

- Counselling and anger management sessions for Daniel
- Monthly short breaks for Mark at a unit for adolescents with disabilities on an ongoing basis
- 4 family sessions with the local CAMHS team
- Daniel will spend every Thursday evening with support carers and a weekend break every 6 weeks for 6 months
- The Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator completes a Personal Education Plan and liaises with the school
Daniel enjoys the time spent with his support carers, Evie and Jim. They help Daniel with his homework, and encourage his reading. They insist that he eats with them and find that he has a great sense of humour and great comic timing! Daniel enjoys their attention and begins to talk about his feelings. One Thursday evening Daniel accompanies them to a final rehearsal of a musical with a local drama group to which they both belong. Evie is a performer and Jim does the lighting. Daniel enjoys himself and on the way home in the car joins in the singing of the finale. Jim and Evie discover another talent….his singing voice. Daniel is embarrassed but enjoys their genuine and enthusiastic approval. They negotiate a change in his weekend stay so that he can attend the performance. Jim asks the chorus master to listen to Daniel singing. He also is very impressed.

The plan continues and Daniel seems calmer. Mark is surprised that he is enjoying his short breaks and Julie is amazed by this.

The chorus master (a local teacher) arranges for Daniel to attend a local branch of Only Boys Aloud and Daniel is persuaded to give it a go. In spite of himself he enjoys it and is relieved to discover that they sing pop, jazz as well as some classical music. His voice impresses everyone.

At the next meeting Daniel says he wants to change schools and attend one where some of his friends from Only Boys Aloud are pupils and where the choir master is the head of music. His parents are reluctant because it involves a long bus journey with ample opportunities for truanting. Daniel is adamant that this is what he wants. The LAC Education co-ordinator supports Daniel and offers additional tutoring to cope with the transfer. Evie and Jim suggest that it would provide Daniel with a new start and stop comparisons with his older siblings. They agree and apply for a transfer.

The change of school is a turning point for Daniel who is determined to demonstrate to his parents that it was the right decision. The counselling helps and Daniel becomes more adept at expressing his feelings. His relationship with Mark remains tense at times but Julie and Dave control the temptation to support Mark in any circumstance and the family starts to spend more time together.
6. The Process

**Process**

- **Family in crisis**
  - Assessment / Update assessment
  - Analysis
  - Compile Children in Need and/or Looked After Children plan as required
  - Application for support care placement

- **Refused / Alternative**
  - Family support services, Accommodation (Section 20), on-going short break

- **Agreed**
  - Planning meeting chaired by Team Leader
    - Child
    - Parents/main carers
    - Support carer
    - Child’s social worker
    - Support carers’ social worker
  - Placement made
  - Regular review meetings
  - End of placement report

**Internal Processes**

- Difficulties identified, outcomes agreed, options explored
- Discussion with support care social worker re: appropriateness and eligibility criteria of service
- Discussions about other support services and appropriateness of plan

**Agenda for Meeting**

- Purpose of service;
- Share information;
- Identify issues;
- Identify outcomes required;
- Responsibilities of support carer, parents/main carers, child and local authority;
- Draw up placement plan;
- Compile information sheets for carer;
- Agree start date;
- Agree statutory requirements.

- Progress of placement, any concerns identified. Any amendments to plan agreed.
- Ongoing monitoring
7. Conclusion

Support care has much to offer families under stress. It is valued by parents for its flexibility and by children and young people for the focused adult time it provides for them when they need some attention and support in their difficulties. It provides social workers with space for families they are working with to address their difficulties. It offers local authorities a valuable resource to prevent children and young people becoming looked after on a longer term basis. And finally it needs resources to ensure that support carers are trained and supported to provide quality care.
8. Appendices

1. Hints and tips for setting up and delivering support care services
2. Support Care Training Flyer
3. Support Care Panel Training Flyer
Hints and Tips for Setting up and Delivering Support Care Services

What is the legal status of children receiving Support Care?
Support Care is offered under Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act if a child spends longer than 24 hours in placement at any one time. While in placement, all children are classified as being “Looked After”. Some services choose to record separately their number of support care Looked After Children.

Which regulations should our service use?
Support Care services are subject to the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Foster Carers.

Do we need to have separate policies and procedures for Support Care?
Not necessarily. Some of your mainstream policies and procedures may be equally relevant to support carers. However there will be others you may wish to adapt. E.g. the procedure for supervisory visits. You should ensure that your Statement of Purposes includes information re: provision of Support Care (Reg. 3 and 4).

What information should we provide for children and young people?
As a minimum, age appropriate Children’s Guides should be available. The Fostering Network Wales Strengthening Families Support Care Project can provide examples of guides. (Reg. 3 and 4).

Our service is managed separately from mainstream fostering. What are the implications?
You must refer to Regulations 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 regarding the registered provider, the appointment and fitness of a manager and the notification of offences. You should also be able to demonstrate how your service links up with mainstream fostering, e.g. in relation to recruitment, assessment, training and retention of support carers. (N.B. The Fostering Network Wales Strengthening Families Support Care Project can provide a set of comprehensive notes on recruiting and retaining Support Carers.)
We are appointing staff specifically to run our Support Care scheme. What should we bear in mind?

As with mainstream fostering, all staff must be fit to practice, suitably qualified, competent and experienced. They should undertake appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Reg. 19, 20 and 21)

What pre and post approval training should we offer to our support carers?

All support carers should undertake preparation training followed by ongoing training once approved (Reg. 17). Suitable preparation training may include Skills to Foster. The Fostering Network Wales Strengthening Families Support Care project has adapted this pre-approval training course specifically for support carers. Post approval training may include safe caring, child protection, alcohol and drug awareness, sexual health, reading with children, familiarisation with Fostering Regulations and NMS, mental health, safety on the Internet, child safety, equality and diversity, basic first aid. This is not an exhaustive list. The Fostering Network Wales Strengthening Families Support Care project can design additional training, e.g. Endings, which is available as a half-day workshop to all support care services in Wales.

Do we need to carry out a full competency based assessment?

Yes, most definitely! (Reg. 27). However the focus of the assessment may be slightly different in places – e.g. greater emphasis may be placed on the importance of working closely with parents. The Fostering Network Wales can deliver workshops for assessors on methods for conducting competency based assessments.

What are the procedures for taking support carers to panel?

All support carers must be approved by a fostering panel (Reg. 26 [1]). However panel members may need training/awareness raising regarding the differences between assessing mainstream foster carers or respite carers and support carers. The Fostering Network Wales can deliver a short training workshop on this topic to panel chairs/members.

What record keeping and agreements should be in place?

Once again, exactly the same records should be kept and agreements put in place as for mainstream fostering. (Reg. 22, 28[5][b] & Reg. 34[3]). However you may wish to adapt existing forms; e.g. a key component of all support care placement agreements is a planned end date. It may be useful for the agreement to include information about how placement will be tapered down in the last couple of months and how the ending will take place.
**What support should we provide for our support carers?**

All carers should be provided with sufficient information about the child before and during placement. It is particularly important that arrangements for out of hours support are very clear, given that many support carers only have children placed with them outside normal office hours. Likewise, carers should have opportunities to familiarise themselves with procedures bearing in mind many of them will be working elsewhere and not available to attend meetings/training during office hours. [Reg. 17 & NMS 22]

**How often should support visits take place?**

As they do for mainstream foster carers, but in a proportionate way. This MUST include one unannounced visit per year. [Reg. 17 & NMS 22]

**Do we need to set up support groups?**

It is important that support carers have opportunities to meet with other carers in similar roles. This may be as part of existing support groups or discrete support groups may be set up. Support carers have told The Fostering Network that there are several benefits to meeting as a discrete group of carers; these benefits include meetings at times/venues to suit carers who often work outside the home, training tailored to their specific needs, opportunity to talk to those offering the same kind of care and a reduction in feelings of isolation. The Fostering Network Wales Strengthening Families Support Care project can offer assistance with the setting up and running of carer support groups. [Reg. 17 & NMS 22].

**What arrangements should be made for annual reviews of support carers?**

These should follow the same format as for mainstream foster carers. It may, however, be necessary to set dates many months ahead and the reviews may need to take place during an evening or weekend to fit around carers’ other commitments. [Reg. 29].

**In what ways does the role of a support carer differ to that of a mainstream foster carer?**

- Children/young people normally only spend a weekend a month or an evening a week with a support carer
- Placements are planned and specific end dates set
- Carers must work with the parents/main carers, as well as the children and other professionals, to achieve the specific outcomes
- In all circumstances, the child’s parents remain central to the promotion of health and education, even if the outcomes are related to these aspects of a child’s welfare [Reg. 11, 14, 15 &16].
What similarities are there between the roles of mainstream foster carers and support carers?

As outlined in previous answers, there are many similarities:

- Placements are outcome focussed; they will end on the specified date provided the outcomes have been achieved. Placements may be extended in certain circumstances.
- It is important that support carers have equal access to training and information about safeguarding themselves and the children in placement. This includes the preparation of a safe caring policy for the household, which should be amended as appropriate for each placement.
- Behaviour management is often one of the areas which will require addressing in order to meet set outcomes for support care placements. Carers should therefore be offered training, support and access to literature to enable them to manage behaviour in placement, and also work with parents on behaviour management strategies.
- Unauthorised absences from the support carer’s home should be addressed using the same procedures that are in place for mainstream foster care placements. (Reg. 12 and 13).

What arrangements should be put in place to evaluate the support care service?

You can use the same procedures that are in place for mainstream foster care. Several support care services have developed innovative ways of involving parents and children in the evaluation; e.g. every child over age 7 is invited to meet with an independent person to discuss how their placement went, once it has ended. The Fostering Network Wales can provide other examples of methods/forms used to evaluate support care services. You should ensure that any information gathered during the evaluation process is used to change the service as appropriate and have evidence of how the information was obtained and how the changes were made. This information should be included in the Reg. 42 report of the review of quality of care in the local authority’s fostering services.

How should we promote our support care service within the Local Authority?

This will depend on your capacity in terms of staffing and number of carers. Most support care services find that a waiting list soon develops when they start promoting their service. The Fostering Network Wales may be able to attend team days etc. to promote support care to a wider audience.
Should our support care service include crisis care or take emergency placements?
This is very unusual in Wales. Most services only offer planned placements and take great care to prevent any emergency placements occurring as this does not sit well with the aims of support care.

Should we run targeted recruitment campaigns for support care?
There is evidence that targeted campaigns – e.g. within schools, hospitals and doctors’ surgeries – are successful. There are also good examples of services that run recruitment campaigns looking for all sorts of carers at the same time – short breaks, respite, support care, mainstream foster care. The Fostering Network Wales can provide a comprehensive set of hints and tips on recruiting support carers together with training for those involved in recruitment.

How can we involve the child and their family in the planning process?
As with mainstream foster care, introductory meetings should take place. It is more common in support care for at least one of these meetings to take place in the carer’s home. It may be appropriate to use Family Group Conferencing, particularly if there are extended family members who could be offering assistance in the same way as support carers.

How can we demonstrate that we value our support carers?
Many support carers are very willing and able to participate in the development of the service – e.g. by providing training in their specific area of knowledge and expertise. Support carers should be paid fees, allowances and payment for skills commensurate with those amounts paid to mainstream foster carers. They should also be invited to any awards ceremonies organised by your service and it should be ensured that good practice is recognised as part of the review process. The Fostering Network Wales is always keen to feature case studies and examples of good practice on its website, at events and in its newsletters.

Are there any differences regarding fees, allowances, etc. between mainstream foster carers and support carers?
The majority of support care services pay their carers a pro rata rate of the main fostering fees/allowances. Some services also provide one off grants for materials (e.g. protective bedding, booster seats) or provide these resources directly. You should also consider what mileage allowances you pay; many support carers take responsibility for collecting/dropping off children and this should be written into the placement agreement if applicable. On the other hand, some services decline to pay clothing allowances etc. because children may only physically be in placement for a total of 12 days.
Do we need to involve an Independent Reviewing Officer?
Yes, it is good practice to do this. The Review of Children’s Cases [Wales] Regulations 2007 must be taken into account. (Reg 12). However some support care schemes do not use Independent Reviewing Officers [IROs] to review placements because placements do not last long enough to necessitate IRO involvement. Also, the voluntary and supportive nature of support care means that although reviews do take place and are a vital part of the process, a less formal process is followed.

How should we link with other services to provide a simultaneous package of support for the child/family?
You should liaise very closely with the child’s social worker to ensure they understand their role in the process. Some support care schemes are based within the Family Support service which makes access to other support services easier. Good links between these two services are vital. These links are also important to ensure that support care is not provided for longer than is necessary and that it does not revert to longer term “respite” care.

What sort of statistical data should we keep?
It is very useful to have statistical data easily available, e.g. for inspections, commissioning, media work, recruitment. This data may include
- Number of approved support carers – status / ethnicity
- Number of referrals – age group, ethnicity, significant factors e.g. parent/child conflict, drug and alcohol misuse, CAMHS involvement
- Number of placements at any one time and in total since service started
- Timescale for placements
- Frequency of support

Should support care be offered as part of post adoption support?
There is evidence that an increasing number of adoptive placements are breaking down and children returning to the care system. It may therefore be relevant to specifically promote support care within the adoption team and to adoptive families. It is unlikely that there would be capacity to offer support care via the Adoption Support Team itself but it may be appropriate to recruit a support carer specifically to work with adoptive families.

Will our support care service be inspected?
Yes, most definitely. The support care service may not be located in the Local Authority’s fostering team but will be inspected as part of the Local Authority’s fostering services.
FREE Training courses and workshops for Support Carers

Skills to Foster for Support Carers
This pre-approval training course has been tailored specifically to introduce prospective support carers to the key issues related to providing support care for children and young people.

It will help participants to:
- Clarify the role and process of approval
- Think about the variety of children and young people who need support care and how to meet their needs
- Look at ways of working with families (parents and carers) using the support care service
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the various professionals involved
- Explore ways to make the home a protective environment for the child and the carer’s own family
- Think about the various factors affecting behaviour such as child development, relationships within the family, poverty and deprivation
- Look at ways to manage issues of placement ‘boundaries’ and ‘endings’

Pathways through Fostering
There are 6 core topics in our unique post-approval professional development curriculum. The emphasis is on practical, accessible information and focuses on dealing with day-to-day challenges, not complicated theory. Each topic area is supported by a publication, a face-to-face training course and an online course. These have been adapted to suit the needs of support carers:
- Safer caring
- Contact
- Attachment
- Health
- Education
- Behaviour

Endings
Support care placements typically last no longer than 9-12 months. Carers therefore need to be equipped to handle regular “endings”.

Objectives
- Consider the impact of endings on children in support care placements
- Explore how support carers can help children and young people cope with endings
- Consider reasons for unplanned endings and a range of options for planned endings
- Acknowledge carers’ feelings in relation to endings

Support Care Awareness Raising workshops
Awareness raising workshops are available
- for foster carers considering changing their role to become support carers
- as an add on for fostering providers’ in-house Skills to Foster courses
- for social workers interested in assessing, approving or supervising support carers
- for children’s social workers who believe support care could help keep children they are working with out of the care system

This training is funded by the Strengthening Families Big Lottery Project run by the Fostering Network Wales
Life Journey Work

Despite the short-term nature of support care, its impact can be life-changing and life-long. One way of acknowledging its significance is to provide children and families with a meaningful record of their support care journey.

Objectives

- Consider the importance of life journey work
- Look at a variety of practical ways to record a life journey
- Consider the role of support carers, children and social workers in the process

To book a workshop or training course please contact Philippa Williams; philippa.williams@fostering.net. There is no charge for this training which is funded through the Strengthening Families Big Lottery project run by The Fostering Network Wales.

Additional workshops

The following workshops have been requested by support carers themselves. Objectives are available on request:

- Attachment issues
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Boundaries
- Disclosures
- Domestic abuse
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Enuresis and encopresis
- Hygiene
- Identity
- Internet safety
- Involving carers and children in the review process
- Setting goals/developing positive relationships with families, carers and social workers
- Social and life skills
- Transitions
- Working with adoptive families
- Working with young families

The Fostering Network Wales, 1 Caspian Point, Pierhead Street, Cardiff Bay, CF10 4DQ

www.fostering.net/support-care
Training for Panel Members
Ideal for business meetings, annual panel training days and staff development

What is “support care”?
Short term, time-limited care for children who are at risk of being taken into long-term foster care. Typically support care is offered to families for one weekend a month, an evening a week or even just a few hours after school. A plan is drawn up with the family to address issues. Support carers are an important part of the team around the family. They are there to help bring about change so that the family can stay together and become less reliable on social services support. Support care can be offered under Section 17 or Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

A survey of support care schemes across England and Wales has identified the top ten reasons why families need support care:

- Mental Health of Parent/Carer
- Sibling Conflict
- Child protection register
- Breakdown in relationship between parents
- Parent Adolescent Conflict
- Violent behaviour in family/risk to other family members
- Drug/alcohol issues of parent/carer
- Statement of Special Educational Need
- Learning Disability of child
- ADHD

Why is the training important?
Support carers are trained and assessed in the same way as foster carers and although there are many similarities in the role, there are also some important differences which are addressed during the training. Panel members who have already attended training have commented;

“I didn’t realise how active a role support carers had to be prepared to play in supporting the whole family, not just the child placed with them.”

“As soon as I heard more about support care at our vulnerable children’s panel, I could think of at least 3 families for whom this provision could make a real difference.”
Who is the training suitable for?
Panel members who:
• Approve and review support carers
• Monitor matching of children and degree of choice
• Monitor range and type of carers
• Manage the access to service provision for children
  on the edge of care
• Identify areas of unmet need for children and families
• Assist staff in seeking packages of family support

How does support care make a difference for families?

“My sister usually gives me a break when I can’t cope with my daughter. When my sister broke
her leg I was having a really bad time and was so relieved when my daughter was offered a
support care break for 4 months, from Friday morning to Sunday morning every week. It gave
me time to have some counselling and I was able to help my sister for a change!”

Mum with mental health issues

“When my baby sister arrived, I felt like she got all the attention. The only way I could
get my mother’s attention was by kicking off. I went to my support carer’s house every
weekend for nearly a year. She took me to Beavers, helped me with my homework, came to
watch me play football and even invited my mate round to play.”

Michael, age 7

“When Chloe arrived, I suffered from post-natal depression and being a single Mum, I really
struggled. Diane the support carer gave me some breathing space while I got some help
and got into some routines with Chloe. Michael doesn’t need to go to Diane’s any more.
He’s in Cubs now and my friend looks after Chloe when I go to watch him play football. I
went to a course at his school about helping your child to read and once every fortnight his
mate comes over while Chloe is at her Dad’s. I was really scared they were going to take
Michael off me at one stage, but that won’t be happening now!”

Michael’s Mum

“If support care had been around when my Dad started drinking, maybe I wouldn’t have
ended up in long-term foster care.”

Suzanne, age 17

How do we book a training session?
If you would like to book a Support Care training session for your panel members, please contact
Philippa.williams@fostering.net. There is no charge for this training which is funded through the
‘Strengthening Families’ Big Lottery project run by The Fostering Network Wales.
For more information about support care and the Strengthening Families project please visit www.fostering.net/support-care or contact:

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