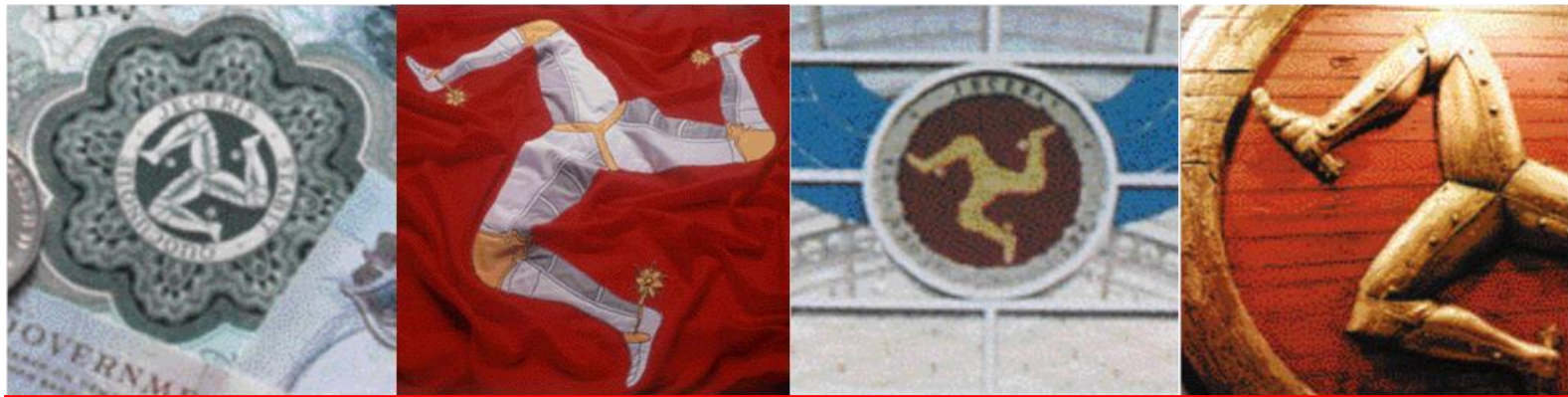




Isle of Man
Government

Reiltys Ellan Vannin



Fostering Services

Minimum Standards

Registration & Inspection Unit

June 2007 (amended October 2013)

Department of Health and Social Care
Rhyenn Slaynt as Kiarail y Theay

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Introduction

This document sets out the Standards that registered providers are expected to apply to their service. These are the minimum standards required and the Regulation of Care Act requires that the DSC considers these standards when making regulatory decisions; there are opportunities within the Standards for registered providers to be creative, innovative and dynamic when applying them to their service, and providers should use them as a baseline from which to deliver and develop services to the children and young people who use them.

As such, the standards are designed to be applicable to the wide variety of different types of children and young people accommodated, including children with disabilities or other special needs.

The Standards have been developed to require and encourage registered providers/managers to deliver services to children/young people that promote the following values:

- Privacy
- Dignity
- Safety
- Choice
- Realising Potential
- Equality and Diversity

Respect and enrichment of lifestyles are also a focus within the standards and providers should be able to demonstrate that in addition to providing safeguards to children and young people their service enriches the lives of the people it serves and assist children and young people to move on and to continue to lead fulfilling lives in the community.

Structure and approach

The minimum standards for fostering services focus on achievable outcomes for the children and young people being cared for; the impact on each individual child/young person of the services provided is central to this approach.

The standards are grouped under a series of key topics:

- Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide
- Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service
- Management of a Fostering Service
- Securing and Promoting welfare
- Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training staff and Foster Carers
- Records
- Fitness of Premises
- Financial Requirements
- Fostering Panels
- Short Term Breaks
- Family and Friends as carers

Each standard is numbered and consists of a numbered heading and numbered paragraphs. Each standard is, for explanatory purposes only, preceded by a title and an indication of the intended outcome in relation to that standard.

The standards are intended to be a qualitative measure, in that they provide a tool for judging the quality of the service provided to each individual. In inspecting against these standards a consistent inspection methodology will be followed together with a reporting format that has been designed for use on the Island. Inspectors will look for evidence that the requirements of the standards are being met and that children are not disadvantaged by the service offered. Providers should use and develop the standards to secure positive welfare, health and education outcomes for children and young people being fostered and to reduce risks to their welfare and safety. It must be recognised, however, that observing the standards are only a part of the overall responsibility of a service to safeguard and promote the welfare of each individual child.

The use of terminology

There is a glossary at the back of the document that gives a brief explanation of some of the terms used.

1. Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide

OUTCOME

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives. Children are aware of what they can expect from the service.

Statement of Purpose

STANDARD 1

- 1.1 There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities they provide. This is provided within a clear written statement of purpose and within a written children's guide
- 1.2 The statement of purpose clearly sets out what services are provided for children who are placed by the fostering service. If education or health services, including therapeutic services are provided, these are covered in the statement of purpose.
- 1.3 The registered provider formally approves the statement of purpose and reviews, modifies or updates it where necessary, but at least annually.
- 1.4 The statement includes the following details:-
 - The service status and its constitution
 - The management structure of the service
 - The service provided
 - The aims and objectives of the service and its principles and standards of care
 - The numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff
 - The numbers of foster carers
 - The numbers of children placed
 - The numbers of complaints and their outcomes
 - The procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers.
- 1.5 The services policies and procedures and any written guidance to staff accurately reflect the statement of purpose.
- 1.6 The children's guide to the fostering service is suitable for all children fostered through the service, includes a summary of what the service sets out to do for children and is provided to all foster carers and to children as soon as they start their placement. The guide contains information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate and about how to complain. If necessary the guide is produced in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.

2. Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service

OUTCOME

The fostering service is provided and managed by individuals with appropriate skills and experience and who are considered suitable to work with children. The service is provided efficiently and effectively and is child centred.

Skills to provide or manage a fostering service

STANDARD 2

- 2.1 The people involved in providing and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively, have the necessary knowledge and experience of child care and fostering and are able to deliver the service in a professional manner.
- 2.2 The registered manager has:
- A professional qualification relevant to working with children, which must be either NVQ level 4 or the DipSW or another qualification that matches the competencies required by the NVQ level 4;
 - A qualification at level 4 NVQ in management or another qualification that matches the competencies required by that NVQ; and
 - At least two years' experience of working with children within the past five years of which one year must have been working at a senior level.
- 2.3 The manager exercises effective leadership of the staff and daily operation of the service in such a manner that delivers the best possible child care.
- 2.4 For the transitional period in relation to 2.2, appointees to the post of registered manager who do not have the appropriate qualifications must commence appropriate training as soon as possible; and in any event not more than 12 months following registration.
- 2.5 The registered provider has the necessary business and leadership skills to control the overall delivery of service and is able to plan, budget and administer the services' finances to ensure that it is operated on a sound financial basis.

Suitability to provide or manage a fostering service

STANDARD 3

- 3.1 Any person providing or managing the fostering service are suitable people to be concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- 3.2 All persons concerned with providing or managing the service must notify the Department of any changes to the information supplied to the Department during the registration process, including:
- any convictions/cautions in respect of offences listed in the schedule to the Disqualification For Caring For Children Regulations 2002

- any orders made which might disqualify them from fostering children under the Disqualification For Caring For Children Regulations 2002.
- 3.3 The registered provider/registered manager must ensure that appropriate checks have been made on those delegated to deputise for the manager, and that records are kept of these checks and the references that have been obtained.

3. Management of the Fostering Service

OUTCOME

The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Monitoring and controlling

STANDARD 4

- 4.1 There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.
- 4.2 There are clear roles for managers and staff; well established methods of communication and a process for ensuring accountability between managers, staff and carers.
- 4.3 The fostering service has robust financial procedures which are reviewed on a regular basis.
- 4.4 Financial information is provided to purchasers of services and others which includes:
- the charge for each service;
 - statements of the amounts paid to foster carers; and
 - itemised accounts paid for wider services which may include health and education.
- 4.5 The fostering service informs carers, managers and staff of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest.
- 4.6 The registered provider/manager can demonstrate that the service is operating in accordance with its statement of purpose and has performance measures in place to monitor quality.
- 4.7 The registered provider/manager has a written development plan which is reviewed annually and confirms the continuation of the services' current operation and resourcing.

Managing effectively and efficiently

STANDARD 5

- 5.1 The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently

- 5.2 The manager has a clear job description setting out duties and responsibilities.
- 5.3 The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and lines of accountability are clearly defined.
- 5.4 Clear arrangements are in place for a nominated person to take charge in the absence of the manager.

4. Securing and promoting welfare

OUTCOME

The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Providing suitable foster carers

STANDARD 6

- 6.1 The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.
- 6.2 The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there. It is inspected annually by the service to ensure it continues to meet the needs of children.
- 6.3 The home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated and is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene.
- 6.4 Each child placed has his/her own bed and the accommodation arrangements reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or any specific need resulting from a disability.
- 6.5 If the child has been abused or has abused another child an assessment of that child's needs and all other children living in the household is undertaken before a decision regarding the sharing of bedrooms is made. The outcome of that assessment is recorded in writing.
- 6.6 The home and the immediate environment are free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm; there is in place safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age, development and level of ability.
- 6.7 The foster carers preparation and training covers health and safety issues and the carer is provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities.
- 6.8 Where the foster carer provides transport for the child, the fostering service ensures that this is safe, appropriate to the child's needs and complies with any statutory requirements.
- 6.9 Foster carers are informed and understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Department's inspection process.

Valuing diversity

STANDARD 7

- 7.1 The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.
- 7.2 Each child and his/her family have access to foster care services which recognise and address needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. If a foster placement has to be made in an emergency and no suitable placement can be immediately found with regard to the above then steps are taken to achieve this within 6 weeks.
- 7.3 The fostering service ensures that carers and social workers work cooperatively to enhance the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth.
- 7.4 The fostering service ensures that their foster carers provide care which respects and preserves each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background; foster carers' preparation talks cover this subject area.
- 7.5 The fostering service ensures that their foster carers support and encourage each child to develop skills to help him/her to deal with all forms of discrimination; foster carers' preparation talks cover this subject area.
- 7.6 Each child with a disability receives specific and appropriate services and support to help him/her maximise his/her potential and to lead as full a life as possible; this includes ensuring appropriate equipment and where necessary and appropriate, adaptation of the carers' home and/or vehicle.
- 7.7 The fostering service ensures that their foster carers give each child encouragement and equal access to opportunities to develop and pursue his/her talents, interests and hobbies. This information is to be included in the written information provided to carers. Disabled children are provided with services and support to help them access as wide a range of activities as is possible.

Matching

STANDARD 8

- 8.1 The fostering service ensures that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting his/her assessed needs.
- 8.2 In matching children with carers the fostering service liaises with the Department to ensure they take into account the child's care plan and recent written assessment of the child and their family.
- 8.3 Matches are achieved by means of information sharing involving all relevant professionals; the child and his/her family; the potential carer/s and their family and other children in placement.

- 8.4 Written foster placement agreements contain specific reference to elements of matching which were taken account of when agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support/training to compensate for any gaps in the match.
- 8.5 Placement decisions consider the child's assessed racial, ethnic origin, religious, cultural and language and match these as closely as possible with the racial, ethnic origin, religious, cultural and language of the foster carer/family.
- 8.6 Where trans-racial or trans-community placements are made, the fostering service provides the foster carer and family with additional training, support and information to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and for him/her to develop a positive understanding of his/her heritage.
- 8.7 Where practicable, each child has the opportunity for a period of introduction to a proposed foster carer/family so he/she can express an informed view about the proposed placement and become familiar with the carer, the carers family and any other children in placement; the home, the neighbourhood and any family pets. The fostering service provides information to carers explaining this preferred approach.
- 8.8 Emergency admissions are subject to a matching review within six weeks of the placement being made and the process in 8.2 – 8.6 is followed as closely as possible.

Protecting from abuse and neglect

STANDARD 9

- 9.1 The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.
- 9.2 Training for foster carers includes training in caring for a child who has been abused, recognising signs of abuse, promoting self caring skills, managing behaviour and maximising and maintaining the child's self esteem.
- 9.3 Safe caring guidelines are provided, based on a written policy, for each foster home, in consultation with the carer and everyone else living in the household. The guidelines are agreed by the child's social worker and are explained clearly and appropriately to the child.
- 9.4 The fostering service makes it clear within the written information provided to the foster carer/s that corporal punishment is not acceptable and that this includes smacking, shaking and all other humiliating forms of treatment or punishment.
- 9.5 The fostering services ensures that carers are able to set and maintain safe, consistent and understandable boundaries for acceptable behaviour in children and that they receive training in the positive care and control of children.
- 9.6 The fostering service makes it clear within the written information provided to the foster carer/s that the use of sanctions and physical restraint is not excessive or unreasonable and that physical restraint is only used to prevent likely injury to the child concerned or to others, or likely serious damage to property.

- 9.7 The fostering service has written child protection policies and procedures which are shared with the foster carer/s and which make clear the duties and responsibilities of the fostering service under the Isle of Man Child Protection Agency Procedures.
- 9.8 Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. This information is scrutinised regularly and shared with other agencies responsible for the child, as appropriate.
- 9.9 The fostering service ensures that foster carers are aware of the particular vulnerability of looked after children and their susceptibility to bullying; procedures are in place to recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and to help foster carers deal with it.
- 9.10 Each foster carer is provided with full information about the foster child and his/her family to enable the carer to protect the foster child, their own children, any other children they have responsibility for and themselves.
- 9.11 The fostering service ensures that the foster carer has a clear written procedure to use if a foster child goes missing from the home.

Promoting contact

STANDARD 10

- 10.1 The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in his/her care plan and/or foster placement agreement.
- 10.2 There are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed.
- 10.3 The fostering service considers the need for, and benefits of, appropriate contact for the child when finding/suggesting a suitable foster carer. Attention is paid to supporting contact where the child is placed outside of the area.
- 10.4 The views of the child or young person are sought and given weight in determining contact arrangements.
- 10.5 In assessment and training of carers, the fostering service stresses the importance of foster carers helping a child to maintain appropriate contacts and the training includes skills required to encourage and facilitate such contacts.
- 10.6 Except where an overriding statutory requirement exists, the fostering service ensures that contact does not take place until the child's social worker has carried out a risk assessment and has made arrangements for any required supervision.
- 10.7 The fostering service provides help and support to the carer in dealing with any difficult contact issues that may arise. The fostering service ensures that the role of

the foster carer in supporting contact arrangements, including any arrangements for the supervision of the contact is clearly articulated in the foster placement agreement.

- 10.8 Financial support is provided to the carer for transport or other costs involved in ensuring contacts take place at the desired frequency and in the most suitable place.
- 10.9 The fostering service ensures that the carer records outcomes of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child; this information is relayed back to the child's social worker.

Consultation

STANDARD 11

- 11.1 The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues which are likely to affect their daily life and their future.
- 11.2 The fostering service ensures that all foster carers understand the importance of listening to the views of children in their care, and are trained and supported in listening and responding to children's views.
- 11.3 The fostering service ensures that the opinions and views of children on all matters affecting them, including day-to-day matters, are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis.
- 11.4 Children with communication difficulties are enabled to make their wishes and feelings regarding their care and treatment known.
- 11.5 The fostering service ensures that children in foster care know how to raise any concerns or complaints about their foster placement, or any other issue affecting their wellbeing whilst in foster care; prompt and appropriate feed back is given to the child following a concern or complaint raised.

Promoting development and health

STANDARD 12

- 12.1 The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets his/her needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to his /her age and understanding.
- 12.2 The fostering service is knowledgeable about health services, including specialist services on the Isle of Man and takes this into account when finding/suggesting a foster carer for a child. The fostering service ensures that no placement made prevents a child from continuing to receive the health care services he/she needs.
- 12.3 Prior to placement, the fostering service provides the carer with full information regarding the health needs of the child; there are clear procedures governing consent

for the child to receive medical treatment. If full details of the health needs are not available before placement this must be obtained and passed to the foster carer as soon as possible.

12.4 The foster carer is provided with a written health record/plan for each child placed; this is updated with the placement and moves with the child. Depending upon age and understanding, the child has access to and understands the health record. Areas to be included in the health record/plan are:

- medical history
- any specific medical or other health interventions which may be required
- any necessary preventative measures
- allergies or known adverse reactions to medication
- dental health needs
- any hearing needs
- any optical needs
- records of developmental checks
- specific treatment therapies or remedial programmes needed in relation to physical, emotional or mental health
- health monitoring required of the foster carer
- the involvement of a child's parents or significant others in health issues

12.5 Each foster carer is given basic training on health and hygiene issues and first aid; with particular emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases. Areas to be included in training are:

- immunisation and screening
- nutrition and diet
- exercise and rest
- personal hygiene
- sexual health
- the effects of alcohol, smoking and other substances
- HIV and AIDS and other blood borne diseases

12.6 The fostering service makes clear to the carer their role in helping to promote the health of any child in their care. This includes:

- registering a child with a doctor or dentist when necessary
- taking the child to any health appointments, including dental and optical, when required
- helping the child to access the services he/she needs
- giving attention to health issues in the everyday care of the child; including diet, personal hygiene and actively discouraging children from smoking, alcohol and illegal substance or solvent abuse and under age sexual activity.
- Providing the opportunity for children to discuss health issues in an open and honest way.

12.7 The fostering service maintains good links with health agencies and helps the carer to secure services for the child when necessary.

12.8 The fostering service requires foster carers to supply information about the child's health needs for the planning and review process.

Promoting educational achievement

STANDARD 13

13.1 The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that he/she is encouraged to attain his/her full potential.

13.2 The fostering service gives a high priority to helping their foster carers to meet a child's education needs

13.3 The fostering service requires foster carers to contribute to the assessment of the child's educational needs and progress, for the planning and review process. The fostering service helps the foster carer to contribute to the delivery of any personal education plan.

13.4 The fostering service clearly sets out in the placement agreement the foster carer's role in school contact; for example:

- parents evenings
- open days
- discussions with teachers

This to be done in conjunction with the birth, parents where appropriate, and in line with the child's care plan.

13.5 The fostering service ensures that their foster carers provide an environment in which education and learning are valued; and that the foster carer establishes an expectation of regular attendance at school, and supports the child's full participation through provision of necessary uniform and equipment, support for completion of homework, and financial or other support for attending school trips and after school activities.

13.6 The fostering service has information systems to demonstrate the educational attainment of the children and young people in their foster care services and to demonstrate the numbers excluded from school.

13.7 The fostering service makes clear its expectations, in relation to school-day responsibilities, of foster carers and the arrangements which will be put in place if any child in their care is not in school. Those arrangements include structured occupation during school hours.

13.8 The foster placement agreement identifies where financial responsibility lies for all school costs, including school uniform, school trips and school equipment.

Preparing for adulthood

STANDARD 14

- 14.1 The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living and that there is a comprehensive plan for young people preparing to leave care which specifies the support and assistance they will need to enable a successful transition into adulthood.
- 14.2 There are clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living.
- 14.3 Foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to a young person preparing to move into independent or semi-independent living.
- 14.4 The fostering service ensures that foster carers understand that they need to provide all children in their care with age/developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills.
- 14.5 The fostering service ensures that the Pathway Plan takes into account the religious, racial, linguistic and cultural background of the young person and clearly outlines arrangements for:
- further education, training and employment
 - securing safe and affordable accommodation
 - support necessary for disabled young people or those with special needs
 - any financial assistance required to enable the young person to set up and maintain independent accommodation
 - claiming welfare benefits if this is applicable
 - general and specialised health education and health care, and other specialist services such as counselling
 - maintaining existing important networks as defined by the young person which may include the foster carers and their family
 - creating networks of advice and support if this is applicable
 - appropriate leisure pursuits
 - seeking assistance should problems arise
- 14.6 The fostering service ensures that each young person preparing to move to independent semi-independent living is consulted about his/her future and encouraged to be actively involved in the decision making process and implementation of the Pathway Plan.
- 14.7 The fostering service ensures that each young person is provided with a copy of the Pathway Plan.
- 14.8 The fostering service ensures that the foster carer contributes to the Pathway Plan.

5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers

OUTCOME

The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the

best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers, and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Suitability to work with children

STANDARD 15

- 15.1 Any person working in or for the fostering service is suitable to work with children and young people and will safeguard and promote their welfare.
- 15.2 There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff which follow good practice and are robust in safeguarding children and young people. All personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in these procedures and how to operate them.
- 15.3 All those working in or for the fostering service are interviewed as part of the selection process and have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities. Telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references. Appropriate checks are made with the Police Vetting Unit on the island.
- 15.4 Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes.
- 15.5 All social work staff of the fostering service has appropriate qualifications or are undertaking a suitable professional qualification, to work with children and young people, their families and foster carers, and have a good understanding of foster care. They have appropriate knowledge and skill, including:-
- knowledge and understanding of the Children and Young Persons Act 2001
 - knowledge and understanding of The Disqualification For Caring For Children Regulations 2002
 - knowledge and understanding of The Private Fostering (Notification) Regulations 2002
 - knowledge and understanding of Children and Young Persons Act 2001 Guidance Volume G
 - knowledge and understanding of The Isle of Man Protection Committee Agency Procedures
 - knowledge and understanding of the UK National Standards for Foster care (1999) and the Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers
 - knowledge of the growth and development of children and an ability to communicate with children and young people
 - understanding of the importance of a complaint procedure
 - an ability to promote equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups
 - knowledge of the roles of other agencies, specifically health and education.
- 15.6 Any social work staff involved in assessment and approval of foster carers are qualified social workers, have experience of foster care and family placement work and are trained in assessment. Students and others who do not meet this requirement

carry out assessments and approvals under supervision of someone who does and who takes responsibility for the assessments and approvals.

- 15.7 All educationalists, psychologists, therapists and other professional staff are appropriately qualified and trained to work with children and young people and their families and foster carers, and have a good understanding of foster care.
- 15.8 Where unqualified staff carry out social work functions they do so under the direct supervision of qualified social workers, who are accountable for their work.

Organisation and management of staff

STANDARD 16

- 16.1 Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.
- 16.2 There is a clear management structure with clear lines of accountability.
- 16.3 Staff are managed and monitored by people who have appropriate skills and qualifications.
- 16.4 The level of management delegation and responsibility is clearly defined and appropriate for the skills, qualifications and experience of the relevant members of staff.
- 16.5 The fostering service has systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads, and to assign tasks to appropriate staff.
- 16.6 There are structures and systems in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively.
- 16.7 There are appropriate arrangements in place for the professional supervision of social work staff.
- 16.8 Staff and carers undertake on-going training and skills development. Foster carers maintain a training portfolio.
- 16.9 There is an adequate level of clerical and administrative support, office equipment and infrastructure for the management of the service and to enable staff who recruit, assess, supervise, support and train foster carers to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner.
- 16.10 Administrative procedures are appropriate for dealing promptly with enquiries from prospective carers and any new requests for service.
- 16.11 There is access to the range of advice needed to provide a full service for children and young people and to support carers; this includes appropriate childcare, medical, educational and other professional or legal advice.

- 16.12 All employees, sessional workers and consultants are provided with appropriate written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service.
- 16.13 All fostering service social workers understand the role of the Departments children's social workers, and there is a clear understanding about how the fostering social workers and the Department's children's social workers work effectively together.
- 16.14 Staff have a copy of:
- The policies and working practices in respect of grievances and disciplinary matters
 - Details of the services offered
 - The equal opportunities policy
 - Health and safety procedures.

Sufficient staff/carers with the right skills/experience

STANDARD 17

- 17.1 The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experience and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.
- 17.2 The full time equivalent staffing complement, in respect of numbers, grades, experience and qualifications, is adequate to meet the needs of the fostering service and is in accordance with the service statement of purpose.
- 17.3 There are contingency plans in place to deal with situations of staff shortages.
- 17.4 Staffing policies are designed to encourage retention of salaried staff, including training; regular supervision; study leave; clear workloads and clear employment terms and conditions; and of carers by providing support, training and other development opportunities.
- 17.5 The fostering service has a recruitment policy and strategy aimed at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.
- 17.6 There is a clearly set out assessment process for carers which defines:-
- the task to be undertaken
 - the qualities, competencies or aptitudes being sought
 - the standards to be applied in the assessment
 - the stages and content of the selection process and the timescales involved
 - the information to be given to applicants
- 17.7 In assessing qualities, competences or aptitudes for fostering, the fostering service considers them in relation to the following:
- child rearing

- caring for children borne to somebody else
- contact between fostered children and their families
- helping children make sense of their past
- sexual boundaries and attitudes
- awareness of issues around child abuse
- approaches to discipline
- awareness of how to promote secure attachments between children and appropriate adults
- awareness of own motivation for fostering/own needs to be met through the fostering process
- religion
- racial/cultural/linguistic issues
- standard of living and lifestyle
- health
- own experience of parenting and being parented
- own experience in relation to disability/attitudes to disability
- attitudes and judgements about how others conduct their lives and/or parent children

Fair and competent employer

STANDARD 18

- 18.1 The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.
- 18.2 There are sound employment practices in place in relation to both staff and carers.
- 18.3 Out of hours' management and support services are available for foster carers.
- 18.4 There are management systems in place for carer supervision, appraisal and support.
- 18.5 There is a comprehensive health and safety policy for carers, children and staff which covers all legal requirements.
- 18.6 In regard to agencies, there is public liability and professional indemnity insurance for all staff and carers.
- 18.7 There is a whistle blowing policy which is made known to all staff and carers.

Training

STANDARD 19

- 19.1 There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.
- 19.2 There is a clear plan for the training and development of all staff involved in fostering work through induction, post qualifying and in-service training. All new staff are given induction training, commencing within 7 days of starting their employment and being completed within 10 weeks.

- 19.3 There is an appraisal or joint review scheme which identifies the training and development needs of all staff involved in fostering work and carers. Individual programmes of training are available, outcomes are monitored and linked to assessment of staff and carer needs, and relate to the tasks assigned to them.
- 19.4 All employees are kept informed of changes in legislation or guidance relevant to their job role.
- 19.5 The effectiveness of training programmes for the staff providing the fostering service is routinely evaluated; training programmes are reviewed and updated at least annually.
- 19.6 Training programmes reflect the policy of the fostering service.
- 19.7 Joint training between fostering service staff and foster carers is held on a regular basis.

Accountability and support of staff

STANDARD 20

- 20.1 All staff are properly accountable and are adequately supported in their role.
- 20.2 All staff have clear written details of the duties and responsibilities expected of them, together with the policies and procedures of the organisation.
- 20.3 All staff who come into contact with foster carers, prospective foster carers and children/young people receive management supervision; a record is kept by the line manager, shared with the employee, of the content of the supervision and of progress made towards achieving the objectives and targets set. Supervision sessions are regular and planned in advance.
- 20.4 Staff receive regular and planned appraisals from their line manager which are recorded and form part of the employment file.
- 20.5 Each member of staff has the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings and it is an expectation of the fostering service that such meetings are attended.

Management and support of carers

STANDARD 21

- 21.1 The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.
- 21.2 There is a clear strategy for working with carers that is properly documented and understood. This includes:
- arrangements for training and development
 - encouragement for self help groups
 - supervision
 - support services

- information and advice
- assistance in dealing with other services, such as health and education
- out-of-hours support
- respite care
- arrangements for reviews.

21.3 The role of the supervising social worker is clear both to the worker and the carer; annual review reports are prepared and available to the Fostering Panel.

21.4 There is a good system of communication between the fostering service social workers, the child's social worker and the foster carer.

Supervision of carers

STANDARD 22

- 22.1 The fostering service is a managed one which provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.
- 22.2 Foster care agreements identify what is expected of foster carers, the agency and/or the Department.
- 22.3 Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice to enable the carer to provide consistent high quality care for each child or young person placed. The supervising social worker ensures that each carer is informed in writing of, and understands, accepts and operates within all standards, policies and guidance put in place by the fostering service.
- 22.4 The fostering service ensures that the Foster Care Agreement is written in a comprehensible style and contains all the information the carer needs to know in order to carry out their functions effectively.
- 22.5 On approval, carers are given a handbook containing details of the fostering services policies, procedures and guidance, legal information and insurance details; this is updated regularly.
- 22.6 Supervising social workers meet regularly with foster carers. Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carers' work. Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. In addition, unannounced visits are made at least once each year.
- 22.7 There is a system in place providing practical support to carers, including:
- out of hours management support
 - prompt payment
 - insurance cover
 - support for foster carers to meet with each other
 - respite care
 - access to social work support

- 22.8 Information about the procedures for dealing with complaints is widely available. Complaints and representations are recorded, monitored and evaluated and outcomes used to inform future provision of services.
- 22.9 Information about the procedures for dealing with investigations into allegations is made known to foster service staff, carers and children and young people, including information about the provision of independent support to foster carers during an investigation.
- 22.10 Records about allegations of abuse are kept including a system for monitoring. There is a clear policy framework which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

Training of carers

STANDARD 23

- 23.1 The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide a high standard of quality care which meets the need of each child/young person placed.
- 23.2 Pre-approval and induction training for each carer includes opportunities to benefit from the experience and knowledge of existing carers. All newly approved foster carers receive induction training.
- 23.3 All training fits within a framework of equal opportunities, anti-discriminatory practice and is organised to encourage and facilitate attendance by foster carers; for example, by utilising convenient times and venues and by providing childcare and reasonable expenses.
- 23.4 Where two adults in one household are approved as joint carers, both successfully complete all training. Individual training is provided in identified key areas and attention is given to the training needs of particular groups, for example, male carers.
- 23.5 There is an ongoing programme of training and self development for foster carers to enable them to develop skills and to deal with areas of perceived weaknesses.
- 23.6 Appropriate training on safe caring is provided for all members of the foster household.
- 23.7 Specific consideration is given to helping and supporting the children of foster carers.
- 23.8 Each carer's Annual Review includes an appraisal of training and development needs which is documented in the review report.
- 23.9 The effectiveness of the training is evaluated and reviewed annually.

6. Records

OUTCOME

All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Case records for children**STANDARD 24**

- 24.1 The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided, and contributes to an understanding of the child's life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in his/her care.
- 24.2 There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format and content of files, and clarifies what information is kept on the foster carer's files and what information is kept on the child's files.
- 24.3 The fostering service ensures the effective integration of information held on files relating to the child and provides copies of records and documents held by the service, immediately on request, to other authorities responsible for the child's welfare. When a child leaves the placement all relevant records are sent to the responsible authority.
- 24.4 The fostering service ensures that the foster carer knows why the child is in foster care and understands the reason for the current placement, its intended duration and purpose, and the details of the child's legal status.
- 24.5 The foster carer encourages the child to reflect on and understand his/her history, according to the child's age and ability and encourages the keeping of appropriate memorabilia. The fostering service makes this role clear to their foster carers.
- 24.6 The fostering service gives the foster carer access to all relevant information to help the child understand and come to terms with past events. In those circumstances where necessary information is not provided from Department or other responsible authority, a copy of the written request for information is kept.
- 24.7 The carer is trained and provided with the necessary equipment to record significant life events for the child, and to encourage the child to make such recordings, including photograph albums.
- 24.8 The fostering service ensures that their carers can store information in a secure manner and understand what information they are expected to keep and what information needs to be passed to the fostering service.

Administrative records**STANDARD 25**

- 25.1 The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service, and as required by applicable regulations.
- 25.2 Separate records are kept for:
- staff, both employed and independent/sessional
 - carers
 - children
 - complaints
 - allegations
- 25.3 There is a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, and remedial action is taken when necessary.
- 25.4 Confidential records are stored securely at all times, and there is a clear policy on access.
- 25.5 Records are in a form which can be readily passed on if a child moves to another placement, or ceases to be looked after or if references are requested on a member of staff or a carer.
- 25.6 There is a permanent, private, secure record for each child and foster carer referred to or appointed by the fostering service. This can, in compliance with statutory requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child and by the child's parents/legal guardians and foster carers.
- 25.7 There is a written policy and procedural guidance for staff regarding the keeping and retention of case files including information about how the persons identified in 25.6 are to be made aware of the nature of records maintained and how to access them.
- 25.8 There is a procedure on storing and managing confidential information that is known to panel members, staff and specialist advisers.
- 25.9 Written entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non – judgmental and do not stigmatise the child. They should clearly distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information.
- 25.10 The system for keeping records is congruent with the Integrated Children's System.
- 25.11 Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcomes.
- 25.12 Children and foster carers are encouraged to access their records, make additions and comments and record personal statements, including any dissent.
- 25.13 There is a system for keeping records about allegations and complaints and for handling these confidentially and securely. Records of complaints and allegations are clearly recorded on the relevant files for staff carers and children, including details of the investigation, the conclusion reached and the action taken. Separate records are also kept which bring together data on allegations and on complaints.

7. Fitness of premises for use as fostering service

OUTCOME

The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Premises

STANDARD 26

26.1 Premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

26.2 There are identifiable office premises to which staff and others with a legitimate interest have access during normal office hours.

26.3 There are efficient and robust administrative systems, including IT and communication systems.

26.4 Premises have:-

- facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room
- appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems
- an appropriate security system

26.5 Premises provide a fully equipped base from which staff work.

26.6 The premises and its contents are adequately insured, or there are alternative prompt methods of replacing items.

8. Financial Requirements

OUTCOME

Independent fostering services are financially viable and appropriate/timely payments are made to foster carers.

Financial Viability

STANDARD 27

- 27.1 The fostering service ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.
- 27.2 Procedures exist to deal with situations of financial crisis, such as disclosing information to the Department and liaising with the Department to safeguard the welfare of children receiving services through them.
- 27.3 The fostering service conforms with regulations applicable to businesses, including Income tax, National Insurance and VAT.

Financial Processes

STANDARD 28

- 28.1 The financial processes/systems of the fostering service are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.
- 28.2 The fostering service has clearly documented financial arrangements for control and supervision of its financial affairs and powers.
- 28.3 The fostering service has a clearly written set of principles and standards governing its financial management, and these are communicated to its managers and accountants.
- 28.4 The fostering service has a written set of principles describing the financial procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all staff, consultants, professional experts, directors, and trustees.
- 28.5 The fostering service's accounts are maintained and properly audited by a registered accountant.
- 28.6 The registered provider regularly receives information on the financial status of the service.
- 28.7 The fostering service publishes its charges and has a clear policy for the charging of fees and expenses for any additional service it may be asked to provide. The statement is available on request to the Department and any others with a legitimate interest.

Payments to carers

STANDARD 29

- 29.1 Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him/her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.
- 29.2 There is a written policy on fostering allowances. This and the current allowance levels are well publicised and provided annually to each carer. Before a child is placed, the carer receives clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them.

9. Fostering Panels

OUTCOME

Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

STANDARD 30

- 30.1 Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.
- 30.2 The written procedures cover decision making when all members of the panel are not in agreement.
- 30.3 There are requirements about suitability of foster panel members, including police checks. No panel members are allowed to begin work until all checks have been satisfactorily completed.
- 30.4 Fostering panels have access to medical expertise as required.
- 30.5 Fostering panels provide a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process – in particular to monitor and review the work of the assessors; to provide feedback; to identify problems, and to ensure that there is consistency of approach in assessment; that it is fair to all applicants and that it has been completed in a thorough and rigorous way.
- 30.6 Foster panels receive management information about the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews.
- 30.7 The independent members of the panel include, as far as possible, expertise in education and child health.
- 30.8 One of the independent members should be a person who has either themselves been placed with foster carers or has a child who has been placed with foster carers.

10. Short-term Breaks

OUTCOME

When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

STANDARD 31

- 31.1 Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures implemented in practice, to meet the needs of particular children receiving short-term breaks.
- 31.2 Where appropriate, requirements for foster care placements for short-term breaks are different from those for children being fostered for longer periods. In particular birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and educational needs.

11. Family and Friends as Carers

OUTCOME

The fostering service policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by carers who are family or friends and recognise the particular needs of this group of carers.

- 32.1 These standards are all relevant to carers who are family or friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of this group of carers.
- 32.2 The fostering service is sensitive to pre-existing relationships when assigning and approving family and friends as foster carers.
- 32.3 The support and training needs for family and friends carers are assessed and met in the same manner as for any other carer.
- 32.4 Mechanisms within the fostering service are designed in a way that encourages consideration of family and friends as carers.

Appendix 1

GLOSSARY

This glossary is intended to be of general assistance to the reader interpreting the standards. The definitions provided do not affect any meaning that a term may have under any relevant legislation.

Abuse

Something that causes actual or likely significant harm to a child. May be physical, emotional, sexual or neglect of the child.

Advocate

A person assisting a child in putting forward their views or making their case on their behalf.

Bullying

Generally, bullying in this context would comprise of the intentional or perceived causing of pain, distress, anxiety, humiliation or social exclusion to one child by one or more other children; by physical or verbal means or through damage/loss of property.

Care Plan

An agreed plan for looking after a child and for meeting that child's current and future needs; made by the placing authority under the Children and Young person's Act 2001.

Child Protection

Taking reasonable measures to reduce the risk of abuse or significant harm of a child; enabling children or staff to report concerns about actual or potential abuse or significant harm; responding appropriately to allegations, occurrences and suspicions of abuse or significant harm of a child.

Children's Guide

A written information document which compliments the Statement of Purpose; written in child friendly language and issued to foster carers and each child, young person receiving foster care, according to their age and understanding.

Fostering Panel

A panel comprising of appropriate individuals whose function is to make decisions about foster placements and foster carers.

Induction

Initial training or guidance given to foster carers at the start of the fostering agreement.

Job Description

A written, agreed and up to date statement of the main tasks and responsibilities of a staff member's job, including overall definition of their role and to whom they are accountable.

Neglect

A single or repeated failure to take appropriate action to prevent harm and distress to the child or young person; includes the withholding of appropriate medication, food and emotional support and is characterised by the child or young person suffering as a consequence from something **not** being done.

Pathway Plan

A written plan that prepares a young person to enter adulthood and leave care.

Physical Restraint

The use of reasonable and approved physical intervention or force, to prevent injury or serious damage to property.

Placement

The agreement for a child to live in a particular place.

Police Vetting Unit (IOM)

An organisation conducting police checks to enable an assessment on an individual's suitability to work with children.

Policy

An operational statement of intent which helps staff make sound decisions, and take actions which are legal, consistent with the aims of the fostering service, and in the best interests of children and young people.

Procedure

The steps taken to fulfil a policy.

Registered Provider/Registered Manager

A person who either provides or manages an independent fostering agency and is registered to do so under the Regulation of Care Act. (NB. The registered provider may also be the manager of the service).

Sanctions

Any negative consequences applied for unacceptable behaviour – e.g. loss of privileges or being given duties to carry out.

Staff

Persons working in or on behalf of the fostering service; whether paid or voluntary, full or part time, casual, agency or contracted.

Statement of Purpose

In the context of this document a written statement which defines the objectives of the fostering service and the service provided both to the foster carer and the child or young person. It is not viewed in isolation and covers those issues set out in Regulations and Minimum Standards.

Welfare

Meeting, in a reasonable way, each individual child's physical, personal, emotional, spiritual and safety/security needs; providing support and guidance as needed for the child's fulfilment in the present and development for the future, taking into account the child's age, characteristics and wishes.



This document can be provided in large print or audio tape on request

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