



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy explains Worcestershire Fostering's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in its role as a provider of fostering services to look after children, foster carers and its workforce.

Worcestershire Fostering seeks to promote diversity by recognising the value of each child, foster carer and member of staff and by developing strong, inclusive practice which is free from all forms of unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination.

Worcestershire Fostering acknowledges its responsibilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010. We will work to prevent discrimination occurring as a result of characteristics such as age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage, civil partnership, religion, belief, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

The agency meets the requirement under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011 – Standard 2 - Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care.

We are committed to equality and diversity in both principle and practice.

2. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- We will encourage children to develop respect for themselves and for others;
- We will deliver services that recognise and build on the strengths of children and young people from all cultures, religions, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability and backgrounds; in ways that meet their needs and helps them to achieve their full potential;
- We will work with foster carers to ensure that they make every effort to ensure that their homes are welcoming to all children and young people and that they have an understanding of the child or young person's identity needs.
- When matching children and young people with carers we will take into account their ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability and background and put in additional support for carers if required.
- Children will be offered opportunities to try out new experiences, which are not restricted by traditional gender options.
- Foster carers are expected to challenge children and young peoples' attitudes, behaviour and language that are non-inclusive and discriminatory, in a positive and accountable manner;
- Managers are expected to monitor the range of children and young people placed in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability. This is to ensure the agency's provision is reaching all and not creating barriers to certain groups

3. INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- All children and young people are given the opportunity to be well cared for and receive a good education in order to develop their full potential.
- Assessments of the child or young person's specific needs are carried out with an aim to support and develop their full potential.
- Children and young people are encouraged and supported to understand their rights, know how to complain and be well-informed about ways of challenging discrimination.
- Worcestershire Fostering will actively seek the views of children and young people and will use the feedback to develop the services the agency provides.
- Wherever reasonably practical the agency Fostering Panel should seek to have care experienced members
- Children are cared for by foster carers who have been suitably trained in all aspects of equality and diversity and who understand their responsibilities.
- Foster carers are expected to examine ways in which diversity can be valued and activities adapted to meet the Individual child's needs including food preparation and menu choices.
- Social Workers/Managers and foster carers are expected to identify and access local community resources that contribute to meeting the needs of individual children and young people.
- Additional support is offered to foster carers, staff and/or children who are finding difficulty in understanding diverse or complex situations.

4. FOSTER CARERS

- Worcestershire Fostering welcomes applications to foster from people regardless of their culture, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- Worcestershire Fostering is committed to equality and diversity and requires foster carers and all staff to challenge any form of discrimination.
- Foster Carers are asked to sign to show their commitment to working within an anti-discriminatory framework when they are approved as foster carers via their Foster Carer Agreement.
- Foster carers are expected to complete the e-learning on Equality and Diversity and Faith and Belief.
- Foster Carers are expected to complete Valuing Difference, a mandatory 2 day course for all foster carers. It aims to give carers a better understanding of the terms 'ethnicity', 'culture' 'disability', 'race' and 'religion', gain an understanding of disability, gender identity and sexuality and feel more confident in how to challenge discrimination in a way that promotes change
- Foster carers are expected to evidence equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice as part of the Training, Support and Development (TSD) induction standards (National Minimum Standards 2011) and ongoing learning and development.

5. WORKFORCE

5.1 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

- No job applicant or employee will be discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, colour, creed, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, political opinion or affiliation, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability
- Managers involved in recruitment and selection will receive appropriate training to ensure that when making selection and recruitment decisions there is no discrimination, whether consciously or subconsciously.
- Job descriptions, where used, will be in line with equal opportunities requirements and job requirements will be reflected accurately in any person specifications.
- We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of the vacancies
- All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.
- Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of any discriminatory nature.
- Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy and Worcestershire County Council Recruitment and Selection Policy.

5.2 WORKPLACE

- We recognise that employees have the right to work in a supportive, safe and harassment-free environment and will deal with complaints robustly
- We will provide opportunities for training and career development which enable all our employees to realise their full potential and contribute to the development of the agency.
- We will ensure employees are aware of their personal responsibility to apply this Policy in all areas of their work;
- We will make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the employment and redeployment of staff with disabilities

All foster carers and staff are required to implement and adhere to this policy. The Registered Manager will have responsibility for monitoring its effectiveness.

