

Request

I write to make a Freedom of Information request, as I understand the case management system used by this Local Authority is Liquid Logic and I am interested in the process pertaining to how you undertake placement searches for children with your in-house foster carers and Independent Fostering Agencies.

From the beginning to end, to include detailing what approvals are required by child's allocated social worker before placement searches can commence, please outline the Council's process of searching for an in-house foster placement and searching for a foster placement with Independent Fostering Agencies. Please include all details such as, for example reference to; specific LCS work trays, any kind of 'Vacancy List' that is updated by Commissioning and the names of forms that are relevant to the process.

Response

Please see attached

Wigan Council – Fostering Searches Process

Social worker has discussions with Team Manager/Service Manager.

For children new into care agreement to accommodate is sought from service lead.

Social worker completes Placement Referral Form on Liquid Logic. Once done this is assigned to the Team Manager for comments then to the Service Lead for approval. Where applicable comments are also requested from the Independent Reviewing Officer and Virtual Schools Team.

Once approved the referral arrives in the Children's Commissioning Work Tray on Liquid Logic where it is quality assured and any amendments requested by returning the Placement Referral Form back to the Social Worker with suggestions.

A file is opened for the child/ren and the details are added to the Placements Tracker.

For urgent same day placements (eg PPP, safeguarding concerns) Social Workers/Team Managers email the Children's Placements and Commissioning Team to highlight the urgency. Often the Emergency Foster Carer is contacted immediately to advise a placement will be required. The Emergency Foster Carer offers 72 hour placement whilst a longer term carer is sourced.

Children's Placements and Commissioning Team ensure that all family members/friends have been exhausted and that any viability assessments on appropriate family/friends is underway.

Referral is shared with Internal Fostering Team Duty Worker who will look at their sufficiency.

Internal Fostering Duty Worker will contact any internal foster carers with availability (immediate or pending). Once the referral has been discussed and shared and foster carer agrees to offer a home, Internal Fostering Duty Worker will complete the matching procedure. This includes sharing a carers profile with the Child's Social Worker and has all relevant training/experience detailed. The Child's Social Worker will also contact the foster carer to discuss the child in more detail. If the carer has other children looked after in their care the relevant Child's Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer are contacted to ensure they have no concerns with any other child being placed. Once all are in agreement the matching form is signed off by a team manager. This details the needs of the child/ren and the carers skills to care for the child/ren.

Any sibling referrals whereby we are unable to place the children together are discussed with the Social Worker/Team Manager. For sibling groups of more than 2 children a discussion is had with the Social Worker/Team Manager to highlight the need for separate placements and preference of which children should be together.

If no appropriate matches with internal fostering the referral is shared with our in and off contract fostering providers. Contact emails are held within the Children's Placements and Commissioning Team's Outlook Contacts.

Once Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carer is happy with the match, a Matching and Approval Form is completed. This outlines the needs of the child/ren and the carers skills to meet these needs. It can also highlight any areas where further support may be required. Once this has been completed (with costs and OFSTED details, references etc) it is attached to the Placement Referral Form on Liquid Logic and sent to the Assistant Director for formal approval. An IPA is raised and shared with the provider.

Searches continue with the IFA until a match is found. Providers are contacted via email and telephone and also invited to Referral Meetings when necessary.

All searches are documented and chronologies provided if required.