

## **Fosterline Wales Factsheet LGBT foster carers**

### **Introduction**

'LGBT' encompasses far more than just the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities suggested by LGBT, and includes a wide range of sexual and gender identities. More information is at [stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk).

Diversity of gender and sexuality should be an accepted part of everyday life and in many ways it is best to avoid giving them too much prominence within fostering. However, unfortunately there are still myths, prejudice and discrimination in Wales, and this can impact on LGBT foster carers' work. This means a factsheet is needed to help protect against discrimination, make people aware of their rights and suggest resources for anyone involved in foster care who wants more information, support or advice about LGBT foster carers.

### **Diversity - can I foster?**

It is hugely important that there is a wide range of foster carers available with different skills, knowledge and life experiences. Some people still believe that myth that LGBT individuals or couples cannot foster. There have been changes to the law allowing both foster and adoptive carers in an LGBT couple to appear as legal guardians on adoption and fostering paperwork. This change resulted in an increase of LGBT foster carers. All fostering agencies are committed to equal treatment of all prospective foster carers and should positively welcome applications. Your sexual orientation is not important when determining your ability to provide a safe and nurturing home to a fostered child.

Many LGBT foster carers have learned resilience in the face of often discriminatory social attitudes. This can make them good role models when looked after children experience discrimination and question their identity.

To find out more visit [thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/could-you-foster](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/could-you-foster)

### **Your rights:**

You have a right to protection from discrimination and harassment under the Equality Act 2010. This means:

- The local authority must assess, train, support and place children with you fairly, using the same criteria as for non-LGBT applicants and foster carers.

- The local authority must make sure that other professionals, families of fostered children, and fostered children themselves, do not discriminate against you or harass you because of your gender or sexual orientation.

## **Placement matching**

Placement matching is covered by The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015. Sexuality is not a relevant factor for placement matching, but gender is. There may be some circumstances where it is more appropriate for a child to be placed with just men or just women, and other circumstances where a mixed gender couple is more appropriate.

When drawing up a placement plan, the child's views, wishes and feelings should be taken into account. It may be appropriate to discuss the possible foster carer's sexuality as part of this.

## **Tips from other LGBT foster carers**

- Don't be surprised if you encounter a certain amount of prejudice or discrimination. The fostering world is drawn from across Welsh society, so reflects the spectrum of attitudes and behaviour – some of which are negative and discriminatory towards LGBT people. This does not mean you should accept or ignore it. Your fostering agency has a duty to protect you from discrimination, and they can only do this if they are aware of any issues you are facing.
- Be confident. The New Family Social's 2011 survey showed 76 per cent of social workers thought LGBT foster carers' openness to difference was a significant strength.
- Any childhood experiences of feeling different, not belonging or being rejected because of part of your identity can help you empathise with looked after children, and make it easier for them to believe you when you encourage them to be confident and resilient.
- Some local authorities and agencies are actively seeking to recruit LGBT foster carers, but some have less positive attitudes. Look around for the right local authority or agency for you.
- Training programmes and literature can make assumptions about the sexuality or gender identity of foster carers. It is helpful for everyone if you make the organisation aware of this whenever you encounter it.
- Other children may ask the child you foster questions that the child may find difficult to answer, may speak negatively about LGBT parents, or use homophobic language. You can help the child you foster by making sure they have appropriate ways to respond.
- Be willing to answer questions and discuss any concerns about the placement expressed by the child's family. Many questions and concerns can be resolved with good communication. This does not mean you should put up with inappropriate questions or discriminatory attitudes.

## Further resources

### To read:

Different Families: the experiences of children with lesbian and gay parents, Stonewall and Education For All, 2010

[stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/Different Families\\_2010\\_.pdf](http://stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/Different_Families_2010_.pdf)

CoramBAAF and New Family Social wrote a series of booklets about LGBT fostering and adoption for birth parents, panel members, child, social workers and foster carers.

[corambaaf.org.uk/bookshop?keywords=&audience%5B%5D=29](http://corambaaf.org.uk/bookshop?keywords=&audience%5B%5D=29)

### To contact:

Stonewall campaigns for the equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people across Britain. They provide an information service. Call them on 08000 50 20 20 or email [info@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:info@stonewall.org.uk) with your enquiry.

[stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk)

New Family Social is the UK network for LGBT foster and adoptive families

[newfamilysocial.org.uk/](http://newfamilysocial.org.uk/)

[FFLAG](#) is an organisation of parents of lesbian daughters and gay sons, which seeks to promote the wellbeing of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, their families and friends. In addition to a confidential helpline, FFLAG works with LGBT family support organisations from all over the world.

## How The Fostering Network can help

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up-to-date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

### Advice

Fosterline Wales

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday.

If you call outside this time please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us or write to us at:

[Fosterlinewales@fostering.net](mailto:Fosterlinewales@fostering.net)

The Fostering Network

1 Caspian Point, Pierhead Street

Cardiff Bay CF10 4DQ

### Support and resources

Our website is an essential source of information, while our online community brings together foster carers for peer support and advice. You can login to share your experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss foster care matters. [thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)

For web based information about LGBT foster carers:  
[thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/blogs/foster-care-fortnight/perceptions-preconceptions-and-reality-fostering-in-lgbt-community](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/blogs/foster-care-fortnight/perceptions-preconceptions-and-reality-fostering-in-lgbt-community)

### **Training and consultancy**

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs.

For more information contact our learning and development manager, Sarah Mobedji at [sarah.mobedji@fostering.net](mailto:sarah.mobedji@fostering.net).

### **About The Fostering Network**

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children to make foster care the very best it can be.

### **Contact**

To find out more about our work in Wales, please contact:

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

Telephone: 029 2044 0940

Email: [wales@fostering.net](mailto:wales@fostering.net)

Web: [thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)



/thefosteringnetwork



@fosteringnet

© The Fostering Network 2017