



## Placement in Foster Care

### SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy explains the arrangements that need to be in place for the matching and initial planning of placements, including introductions and the drawing up of Placement Plans. It also includes arrangements where placements end.

Placements will only be made with carers who have been approved by the Agency (within their terms of approval) and who have signed a Foster Care Agreement.

This chapter is compliant with **The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011** and the **Fostering Services National Minimum Standards**:

**Standard 15, Matching the child with a placement that meets their needs.**

**Standard 31, Placement Plan and Review**

**Standard 10, Providing a Suitable Physical Environment for the Foster Child.**

### OUTCOMES

- Children and young people are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved, respected and valued;
- Children and young people feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement;
- The responsible authority has information and support from the Agency which it needs to facilitate an appropriate match between the carer and child, capable of meeting the child's needs and consistent with the wishes and feelings of the child, so maximising the likelihood of a stable placement;
- Children are cared for in line with their Placement Plan /Care Plan;
- The Agency takes action to chase up outstanding reviews or visits from the responsible authority, contributes to those reviews and assists the child to contribute to their reviews;
- Children and young people live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

### UNDERPINNING LEGISLATION

Fostering Regulations:

- Reg. 11 - Independent fostering agencies - duty to secure welfare;
- Reg. 17 - Support, training and information for foster parents;
- Reg. 26 - Assessment of prospective foster parents;
- Schedule 3 - Information as to prospective foster parent and other members of their household and family;
- Schedule 5 - Matters and obligations in Foster Care Agreements.

Children Act 1989:

- S.22 - General duty of local authority in relation to children looked after by them.

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2010):

- Reg. 9 - Placement Plan;
- Reg. 14 - Termination of placement by the responsible authority;
- Reg. 22 - Conditions to be complied with before placing a child with a local authority foster parent;
- Part 6 - Reviews of the child's case.

## RELATED GUIDANCE

[The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(2015\)](#)

## Contents

---

1. **Initial Referral Process**
2. **Matching Process**
3. **Placement Process**
4. **Ending Placements and Placement Moves Within the Agency**

### 1. Initial Referral Process

---

The Agency will only accept referrals for placements from local authorities. On behalf of the child's social worker the Local Authorities commissioning team makes a referral to the Agency on a Referral Form requesting a placement.

Where a referral is made, the referring local authority should be requested to provide information as to the following:

- i. The purpose of the placement;
- ii. The Care Plan, including issues around contact;
- iii. Time scales;

- iv. Any risk assessments that have been prepared in relation to the child;
- v. A description of the child's wishes and feelings and relevant others.

In the case of an emergency placement where it is not possible for the referring local authority to provide the above information at the time of the referral, they should be asked to provide as much information as is available and, if the placement goes ahead, they should be asked to provide full information within 5 working days of the placement.

Any information that is not provided within those timescales should then be requested from the commissioning team or the social worker's manager and if it is still not provided the name of the child's Independent Reviewing Officer should be requested and (s)he should be contacted by the foster carer's Supervising Social Worker.

It is particularly important for the Agency and in particular the carer, to have all information about the child and their family which would hinder the carer in providing a safe environment for the child and others in the household.

The Agency provides an On-Call service. The Manager has the experience to offer advice and guidance to employees/carers who work for the organisation and are able to allocate trained staff to offer further direct support if required.

The Agency operates 9.00am - 5.00pm (Monday - Thursday), 9.00am - 4.00pm Fridays with the On-Call System available out of office hours. See Local Contacts for Out of Hours telephone number.

The Agency identifies emergency and planned placements for children aged 0 - 18, including respite placements.

## **2. Matching Process**

---

The referral should be considered immediately by the Agency who will liaise with the referring local authority as necessary. As part of this exchange, information about proposed foster carers will be provided to the referring local authority in order to consider whether the carers can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs, taking into account the impact of the proposed placement on existing members of the household.

Each child over 3 will have their own bedroom or, where this is not possible; the sharing of the bedroom will be agreed by the Placing Authority.

In accordance with the agency's safer sleeping procedure, babies must sleep in the foster carer's bedroom until they are at least 6 months old, or in their parent's bedroom in the case of parent and child placements.

Any child with known middle ear or respiratory tract infections, or who is prone to asthma and bronchitis, will not be offered a placement in a smoking household, although exceptions may be made where it is in the child's best interests.

The various placement options should be discussed with the referring Local Authority and a professionals' planning meeting can also be convened at this stage if required, for example, if a child has complex needs.

The matching process should consider the child's needs especially regarding the following key areas:

- Schooling (note that where a child in key year 10 or 11 is moving to a placement which will disrupt his or her education, the approval of the Placing Authority's Nominated Officer is required);
- Expectations around contact with the child's family, particularly in relation to the foster carers' part in facilitating and/or supervising such contact;

- The child's identity/race/culture/religion;
- The child's history;
- The child's behaviour;
- The child's health;
- The focus of the placement.

The matching process should also consider the carer's availability and:

- Their experience;
- Their strengths;
- Their address and the distance from the foster home to the child's school;
- Any other children in the placement;
- The foster carers' own children and other family members.

All the various parties involved in the matching process should feedback to the proposed carer's and the Registered Manager with any problems and gaps identified between the needs of the child and the carer's ability to meet them. An action plan should be agreed to see if any of the outstanding issues can be resolved, such as transport difficulties or trans-racial issues, and the agreement of the carers and the Supervising Social Worker to the plan sought.

The Agency will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child cannot, with support, be provided by the proposed foster carers.

The child's social worker should be advised to contact or visit potential carers prior to a decision about a placement being made.

Once the child's needs have been matched with the carers and a viable action plan agreed (to resolve any unmatched needs or outstanding issues), the placement match should be passed to the relevant Manager for final agreement before it is confirmed to the referring local authority.

### **3. Placement Process**

---

#### **3.1 Placement Planning**

Once a decision has been made to make a placement, a pre-placement planning meeting should take place between the foster carers, the Agency's Supervising Social Worker and the Placing Local Authority. If appropriate the child and his/her family/significant others should attend.

This meeting must consider and agree the detailed placement arrangements for the child.

Where it is not possible to hold a pre-placement planning meeting, for example where the placement has to be made in an emergency, a planning meeting must take place within 5 working of the placement.

The main purpose of the planning meeting is to share full information about the child with the foster carers and agree the contents of the Placement Plan which will include confirmation of the following arrangements:

- Registration of the child with local health professionals (GP, Dentist and Optician) and arrangements for the child's health care (including the administration of medication). Any other health professionals involved will be informed of the placement by the Placing Authority and a decision made by the relevant health trust with regard to future plans for their continued involvement or moving to a more local provision;
- Signed medical consent from the Placing Authority and parents if appropriate;
- Plans for the child's schooling and educational needs, including seeking the role of the foster carer in implementing the child's Personal Education Plan, Education, Health and Care Plan (where applicable), any extra educational support. This should include the education arrangements for children under 5 and the training or educational requirements of those over 16;
- Regularity of visits from the Placing Authority's social worker. (In accordance with current regulations);
- If appropriate, details of contact arrangements with family members/significant others (including whether the foster carer has delegated authority to make arrangements for the child's social visits to friends and relatives including overnight stays);
- Any specific cultural, religious or dietary needs of the child;
- Any behaviour management issues;
- Where the proposed placement relates to a young person whose plan includes leaving care, arrangements should be in place for their preparation for independence including their Pathway Plan;
- The steps that the Agency will take if reviews and visits do not take place within the designated timescales, for example contacting the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Any delegated authority details.

The Placement Plan must specify delegation of authority to make decisions about the child's care and upbringing by the foster carer.

It also sets out the matters upon which authority may be delegated:

- Medical and dental treatment;
- Education;
- School trips and overnight stays;
- Leisure and home life;
- Faith and religious observance;
- Use of social media;
- Any other matters which the local authority/persons with Parental Responsibility consider appropriate.

The Placement Plan must also identify any matters about which the local authority/persons with Parental Responsibility consider that the child may make a decision about.

The planning meeting will also agree whether there will be a period of introduction for the child prior to the placement - see **Section 3.3, Introductions**.

As well as providing the Placement Plan, the child's social worker should also be requested to provide as much information about the child as possible, for example:

- The chronology of significant events in the child's life;

- A copy of the Care Plan;
- Any other relevant information about the child. For example, recent Looked After Review reports, Pathway Plan, Personal Education Plan, reports from specialists or therapists.

### 3.2 Placement Preparation

It is the Agency's aim to make moving a positive experience for each child/young person. Whilst appreciating it is an apprehensive and stressful time, the Agency will endeavour to minimise the effects upon each child and help them to settle into their new home as effortlessly as possible.

Once the placement has been identified, the Supervising Social Worker should ensure that the child has a copy of the Children's Guide, which will be available in another format if required, within which there are details regarding the Complaints Procedure. A copy of the complaints procedure should be provided to the parents.

Wherever possible, arrangements should be made for the child, parents or carers and the social worker to visit the foster home prior to the placement. If this is not possible, arrangements may be made for the carers to visit the child and parents or carers; or, as a minimum, for information about the foster carers to be sent to the child - see **Section 3.3, Introductions**.

If none of these arrangements can be made, for example where the child is being placed in an emergency or at short notice, extra care must be taken in case the child is frightened or confused, and the information described above should be provided to the child as soon as possible after the placement.

The Placement Plan will be drawn up by the child's social worker as agreed at the planning meeting and this should be provided to the foster carer and Supervising Social Worker by the child's social worker prior to or within 5 working days of the placement, together with a copy of the child's Care Plan and the other written information about the child as agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting.

### 3.3 Introductions

The Agency may provide a copy of the carers welcome book and individual Safe Caring Plan / Policy to the placing Local Authority for the child's social worker to share the information of the carer with the child prior to the child meeting the foster carer's. Wherever possible there should be a period of introductions between the child and the foster carers.

This should involve the following:

- The child receiving information about the foster home including a Welcome Book of the foster carers and members of their household and family network and;
- A meeting between the child and the carers, preferably at the foster home, as an initial introduction during which the child can become familiar with the house and the household;
- Ideally, the child having at least one overnight visit before a placement is confirmed.

Throughout the introduction process carers will discuss issues with the child regarding routines within the placement, information about bedtimes, meals, visitors, pocket money (the amount of pocket money will be in line with the Placing Authorities policy), school, privacy and the overall expectations regarding behaviour within the placement. Equally, the child is encouraged to discuss their views and what expectations they have in an effort to resolve any uncertainties/concerns at the outset and to reinforce transparency and honesty to the child.

### 3.4 Notification of Placement

Notification of the placement must be sent, by the Placing Authority to all those consulted and involved in the decision-making process. The Agency will also send notifications in regard to placements with foster carers.

The Placing Authority must also notify the following:

1. The service within the local authority responsible for arranging Looked After Reviews;
2. The relevant Health Trust, Education Service and the Local Authority's Children's Services in the area where the child is placed; these notifications must be made in writing advising of the placement decision and the name and address of the person with whom the child is to be placed.

### 3.5 Health Assessments

It will necessary for the foster carer to ensure that the child is registered with a GP, Dentist and Optician, either retaining practices known to them or in the area where they are placed. This needs to be done within seven days of the child being placed. This is usually covered in the child's Placement Plan - see **Section 3.1, Placement Planning**.

Where it is the child's first placement as a Looked After Child, it will also be necessary for the child's social worker to arrange a Health Assessment so that a Health Plan can be drawn up in time for the first Looked After Review. If the child's social worker agrees, these arrangements may be undertaken by the foster carer and will be covered in the Placement Plan.

## 4. Ending Placements and Placement Moves Within the Agency

---

Placements will not be ended by the Agency for reasons other than:

- The end of the placement is within the child's Care and Placement Plan or Pathway Plan;
- To protect the child;
- To protect the other members of the household;
- In an emergency where other more suitable arrangements to maintain the placement cannot be made.

See **Placement Stability and Placement Disruption Policy**.

If the Placing Authority is proposing to end the placement for reasons other than those stated above, the Agency will inform the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

Whenever a placement move is being considered the wishes and feelings of the child must be obtained and considered. Where their wishes and feelings are not being observed the reasons for this must be explained to them. Children should not move placements until they have had a chance to express their view and they have been given an explanation that they can understand of the reasons for the move.

If a move to another carer within the Agency is being considered, this will be treated as a move to a new placement.

If a young person is approaching 18 and there is a view that the placement should continue, this can be explored further and if it is in the child's interests, it may be possible for the placement to continue - see **Transition to Adulthood and Leaving Care Procedure**.

Foster carers will be encouraged wherever possible to be able to maintain contact with placed children and young people who have moved on.