

Parent and Child Placements

Policy and Procedures

Introduction

The Parent and Child Placements Policy is written to ensure that the agency operates in line with legislation and national guidance, to ensure that all parents, their babies/children, the foster parents, supervising social workers, managers and local authority partners have the same understanding about the placement tasks, roles, responsibilities and the legal basis for doing so.

Working within this framework provides clarity around the placement's purpose, its duration, and the responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Parent and Child placements are complex and demand foster parents to be experienced, skilled, and able to work closely as part of a team. These placements carry unique risks, due to the vulnerability of very young children being placed, and the necessity of having an adult in a foster parent's home. The foster parent is required to undertake observation and monitoring tasks whilst mentoring and nurturing the parent, acting in a parental role and, at times, completing parenting tasks.

The aim of these placements is to help the parent develop their skills to achieve a "good-enough" level of parenting to enable them to move on with their child. This is achieved within a stable and consistent foster placement with ongoing support and guidance in parenting skills, adapted to meet the diverse needs of the particular family. There will also be opportunities for the parent to develop their independent living skills to support their parenting role.

Where it is not possible for the child to remain with their parent long-term, ISP will work closely with the placing authority to ensure a smooth transition from placement for both parent and child. This may include the foster parent continuing to care for the child or parent in the short term. ISP will work with the parent and child to prepare for separation, acknowledging the attachments that have been made, recording their time together with photographs and other memorabilia and providing them with a history of their time together.

Regulations and Standards

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

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Children Act 1989, 2004, and 2014

National Minimum Standards 2011

European Convention of the Rights of the Child

Legal Context of Placements

The number of Parent and Child arrangements has increased markedly in recent years. The reasons for this are complex.

Partly the rise is a result of concerns that, in the words of an influential ruling by Justice Munby (Re. M (2003) 2 FLR 171 Unborn baby MR and Gloucestershire County Council (2003)), separating a parent from their child is a "draconian and extremely harsh measure which demands extraordinarily compelling justification." This concern to respect the privacy of family life if at all possible has led to a determination on the part of all social care bodies to find arrangements that enable parents to remain with their children while the quality of care given by the parents is observed.

There is a growing recognition that foster care can be a positive and non-institutional alternative to residential provision, and that with the appropriate preparation, support and supervision such arrangements can and do offer a good opportunity to enable a parent and child to remain together.

There are four legal scenarios that apply to parent and child fostering, with different implications depending on the regulations that apply. (Refer to BAAF Good Practice Guidance 2011).

Scenario	Age of Parent	Legal status of parent	Legal status of child	Relevant Regulatory Context
1	Under 18	Looked after	Looked after	Parent and child both subject to <i>Care Planning Regulations 2010 and Fostering Regulations 2011</i>
2	Under 18	Looked after	Child 'placed with parents' <i>Care Planning Regulations 15 to 20</i>	<i>Care Planning Regulations</i> relevant to both parent and child. <i>Fostering Regulations</i> relevant to the parent only.
3	Under 18	Not looked after	Looked after	Placement with parents regulations do not apply with this scenario. Only the child is subject to the 2010 Care Planning and 2011 Fostering Regulations.
4	Under or over 18	Not looked after	Not looked after	Neither the 2010 Care Planning nor the 2011 Fostering Regulations apply.

The table above will confirm that clarity regarding the nature of the arrangement is essential from the outset. Key questions during the referral process are as follows:

- What is the proposed legal status of the parent and child?
- Who is being 'looked after'?
- What are the aims, tasks and proposed duration of the arrangement?
- Who is responsible for ensuring regulatory compliance in relation to all parties?
- Who is carrying out the specific risk assessment of any adult parent prior to the arrangement starting, and what information will this be based upon?

Parenting Assessment

ISP will contribute to the assessment process coordinated by the local authority and provide copies of the foster parent's records, reports and observations. An observation report will be provided by the agency as stated in the Parent and Child Agreement.

Recruitment and Training of Foster Parents

The agency is committed to ensuring that only those foster parents with an appropriate aptitude take on Parent and Child arrangements.

In summary, the qualities sought by the agency can be described as follows:

- **Heightened child protection awareness.**

Serious Case Reviews constantly remind us that the child can quickly become 'invisible' when professionals become drawn into an inappropriate advocacy role in relation to birth parents. This risk is aggravated by the nature of Parent and Child arrangements.

Foster parents taking on this role need to be vigilant for a range of risk factors. They must be very clear about when they need to step in, and when they need to pass on concerns to professionals. Objective assessment skills, combined with a willingness to take decisive action when needed, are therefore essential qualities. Some of the risk factors may relate to the parent's own personal networks (e.g. previous or current drug misuse or domestic violence) and foster parents will need to be sufficiently robust to deal with this potential problem area decisively and with a clear child focus. Equally, a lack of adequate supervision and care for a young infant must be responded to quickly and effectively.

Foster parents must be familiar with, and follow, our *Safer Sleeping Procedure*

- **Working with birth parents.**

By definition, Parent and Child arrangements require a high level of engagement with birth parents - a level quite unlike other types of fostering in England today. The ability to form strong relationships with parents, while retaining a clear child focus, is essential.

- **Keeping excellent written records**

The extent to which the foster parent's observations will inform the parenting assessment will depend upon the specific legal context of the arrangements. However, common to all Parent

and Child arrangements is the need to keep excellent, up-to-date written records, which clearly distinguish between fact and opinion. When appropriate, the records will be needed to contribute to assessments. ISP does not support foster parents taking sole responsibility for the assessment of parenting capacity, which the agency believes should remain a professional responsibility. However, contributing to an assessment is an important part of the role.

- **Practical considerations.**

Sufficient space is essential for successful Parent and Child arrangements. Balancing the need for privacy against the need for appropriate supervision is a judgement that will need to be made on a case-by-case basis, dependent upon ongoing risk assessment of the arrangement, and informed by the placement plan. The foster parent must have sufficient availability to ensure that an appropriate level of supervision can be guaranteed throughout the duration of the arrangement. Given the potentially stressful nature of such arrangements, it is important that the foster parent has a strong support network for themselves.

- **An ability to work as part of a team.**

Related to the above points, the ability to work alongside professionals - an essential task for all fostering - is particularly important in relation to Parent and Child arrangements. Foster parents must be prepared to work to an agreed plan, and contribute to the urgent revision of this plan when appropriate.

- **Experience and capacity for the role**

There are specific requirements for foster parents wishing to be approved as Parent and Child foster parents. This applies to foster parents transferring to the agency, newly recruited and current foster parents.

1. Minimum of 1 years' experience of active mainstream fostering or experience of working in a relevant child care profession.
2. The completion of ISP's mandatory training, Parent and Child training, and Safeguarding Adults training. Paediatric First Aid Training either as a standalone course or considered in detail in standard First Aid Training. For a fostering couple, these training requirements apply to both carers.

Additional training courses may be highlighted within the foster parent's PDP as being helpful in relation to specific needs of young parents and babies.

The foster parent's Supervising Social Worker will also need to complete the Parent and Child training in order to inform their practice.

3. A large bedroom/additional bedroom space, must be available and provide reasonable living space for the parent(s) and child/children. If the requirement is for the baby to sleep in foster parent's room, then this room must have sufficient space to provide for reasonable living space for a cot/ sleeping arrangements for the baby.

N.B. In accordance with ISP's Safer Sleeping Procedure, babies up to at least 6 months of age must sleep in either the foster parent's room, or their parent's room.

4. To be able to evidence skill in objective record keeping and report writing and making verbal representations in professional meetings including giving evidence in court.

The above requirements must be evidenced in a full annual review for presentation at Panel for change of approval. If the foster parent is newly approved and seeking approval for Parent and Child placements, the requirements must be evidenced in the Form F. Existing foster parents who want to change their approval will need to be assessed and an addendum to be added to their existing Form F which should be presented at Panel for change of approval.

In the event that a young person already in foster care becomes pregnant and wishes to continue living with their foster family, with their child, the same previously mentioned criteria will apply to their foster parent.

Placement matching and placing alongside

Once a referral has been received by the agency, the Placements Team will start the 'matching process'.

The screening template used for matching is a two stage process and provides the local authority with foster parents who are the most suitable match.

Stage One of the matching process is completed by the Placements Team and will identify important factors for the matching process, including:

- Approval criteria
- Experience (e.g. substance misuse, learning difficulties, mental health, domestic violence, adult parents and two-parent placements)
- Training
- Location

This matching is important to decide on how best to support the parent and to meet the parent's needs which will then be looked at again in the Placement Agreement to ensure that all parties work towards meeting the individual's needs.

Stage Two of the matching process requires the supervising social worker and registered manager to evidence in more detail the suitability of the match and to consider any other factors such as previous complaints or concerns that could impact on matching. A matching report will be completed by the SSW. The registered manager **MUST** agree/authorise the potential match of Parent and Child to the foster parent.

In the event of absence of the registered manager, an alternative agency manager **MUST** sanction the placement being made. Registered managers will need to sign their agreement to the placement match on the matching document having considered that the placement is a good match, the foster parents are suitably experienced and trained, the SSW is suitably experienced to manage the case and all placement information has been made available by the LA. The registered manager's scrutiny of risk, and supervision of Parent and Child placements needs to be of the highest standard.

If the placement is to be made with a family who have other children and young people in placement, permission to place alongside must be obtained from the local authorities concerned.

A note about the Usual Fostering Limit

Given the potential for confusion regarding legal status explored above, it is important to emphasise that the usual fostering limit remains three in relation to Parent and Child arrangements. No fostering household may foster more than three children unless all the children are related to each other as siblings, or the resident local authority has agreed the exemption in relation to specific placements. The statutory guidance outlines that, even though an adult parent or a non-looked after parent is not counted as one of the three, care should be taken not to overburden foster parents.

Pre-placement planning

- **Care Planning Arrangements**

Given the potential complexity of Parent and Child placements, it is essential that all available information, legal documents, risk assessments, and previous care plans are made available to inform the placement prior to placement or immediately upon commencement of the placement. The local authority has a duty to provide the foster parent and agency with a copy of the Placement Plan.

The local authority is expected to provide full information regarding the parent and child. If this is not forthcoming then the *Escalation on Care Documents Procedure* will be initiated.

- **Placement Planning Meeting**

ISP will arrange a Parent and Child Placement Planning Meeting before the placement starts or, where this is not possible, within **5 days** of the placement starting. The aim of this meeting is to ensure that we have all available information relating to the placement, and to complete the Parent and Child Placement Agreement and Parent and Child Risk Assessment.

If the parent is also looked-after then a separate Placement Planning Meeting should take place in order to ensure that the parent's needs are fully considered both separately and in conjunction with those of their child.

Notes of any pre-placement planning meetings made by ISP will be entered on the Charms record for the placement, and shared with participants.

- **Placement Agreement**

All Parent and Child placements will be subject to the completion of the Parent and Child Placement Agreement. This will be completed by the ISP Supervising Social Worker and sets out the day to day arrangements for the placement in detail, for the avoidance of any uncertainty or confusion. It remains the responsibility of the local authority to fulfil their primary legal duty to produce a Care Plan and the agency Parent and Child Placement Agreement is intended to be an additional safeguarding measure.

The expectation is that contribution to the agreement will be made by the local authority social worker, the supervising social worker, the parent/s in place and the foster parent.

On completion of the Agreement, further review dates should be agreed and arranged.

It is essential that the parent understands the contents of the Placement Agreement, including the sleeping arrangements agreed in line with ISP's Safer Sleeping Procedure, and the parent must sign

this agreement. If the parent is over 18 years old, they are deemed to be adults by the law and therefore no other person can sign on their behalf to adhere to the agreement.

- **Introductions**

Prior to placement, ISP actively encourages parents and local authority social workers to visit foster parents prior to the placement commencement.

ISP has a strong and significant history of working with Parent and Child placements and evidence shows that introductions, and planned placements, produce better outcomes.

- **Financial Arrangements**

Parent and Child placements may attract different fees depending on the services required. When the placement is agreed, the Placements Manager will inform the foster parent in writing of the level of fees and any other financial details.

Parent and Child placements will require a considerable amount of equipment. Who provides the equipment for each placement must be clarified prior to placement. This should be included in the Parent and Child Placement Agreement.

To comply with advice and guidance on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, mattresses for cots or Moses baskets will not be shared between babies. A new mattress **MUST** be used and foster parents can discuss this with the agency.

For a parent under 16, the foster parent should ordinarily provide clothing, pocket money, local travelling costs, birthday presents, Christmas presents and holidays as with any other child in their care. However, this will be dependent upon the Local Authority's Care Plan – for example the LA may request that the foster parent give the parent a weekly allowance to enable them to learn to be responsible for budgeting for their own needs and that of the child, and for the foster parent to assess their ability to do so.

A parent over 16 may be eligible for Universal Credit and Child Benefit whilst in placement, and will be assisted to claim if this is the case. Again, this will enable the parent to be responsible for budgeting for their own needs and that of the child, which is an important factor in preparation for their potential return to the community.

A parent receiving benefits will be expected to provide food, toiletries, nappies and clothing from this allowance, but the fee paid to the foster parent will remain the same.

Usual household bills such as gas, electric, water etc. will continue to be paid by the foster parent.

Provision of equipment will be clearly defined within the Placement Agreement. However, foster parents are expected to provide the equipment to meet basic care needs.

Safeguarding

- **PNC/DBS Checks**

In compliance with the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 4, Annex B (12), the following safeguarding action will be taken in relation to Parent and Child placements:

For all parents over the age of 18, a Police National Computer (PNC) check will be requested and the results will inform the Parent and Child Risk Assessment. Where the police force for the parent's relevant placing authority refuse to undertake this check, the highest level of risk will be assumed.

There must be written agreement from the Registered Manager that this has been discussed and fully covered within the Parent and Child Risk Assessment and reflected in the Placement Planning Agreement.

While an adult parent is a part of the fostering household, there is no statutory requirement for a DBS check to be completed prior to joining the household. However, reflecting the requirements of Regulation 12(2), a specific risk assessment must be carried out to assess the safety of all children in the household. As soon as practicable, the agency will therefore carry out a DBS check, especially where other children (including birth children) are in the placement.

- **Safer Sleeping**

The Parent and Child Risk Assessment, Child Specific Safer Caring Plan (birth to 3 years) and Parent and Child Placement Agreement will cover the planned sleeping arrangements (including the required frequency of checks on the baby whilst sleeping during the night and day) and ensure they are in line with the agency's Safer Sleeping Procedure.

The SSW will confirm there is sufficient space to accommodate a cot in the foster parent's bedroom and in the bedroom of the birth parent. The baby's sleeping arrangements will be checked weekly by the supervising social worker when they visit the home.

- **Safer bathing**

The Parent and Child Risk Assessment, Children's individual risk assessments and Parent and Child Placement Agreement will reference bathtime routines and make clear the level of supervision that is required and how this should be carried out in relation to age and ability.

- Children aged 5 or under should always have constant supervision while bathing.
- Children with disabilities and complex needs may need supervision until a later age than other children.
- Children up to the age of 8 should still have a level of appropriate supervision to ensure their safety.

For further advice: <https://www.rospea.com/resources/hubs/keeping-kids-safe/bath-time>

- **Bruising or injury in non-mobile babies**

The foster parent must be familiar with the agency's Bruising or Injury in Non-Mobile Babies Procedure. The foster parent's duty, as set out in the Placement Agreement, is to report any such injuries to the agency immediately. The agency is required to make a safeguarding referral to the local authority.

If the bruising/injury is noticed in the presence of the parent, it may be appropriate and necessary to comment on this, e.g. 'I notice baby has a bruise on his leg', and remind the parent that the foster parent is duty-bound to report this to ISP. Anything said by the parent in reply should be reported as part of the notification, but the foster parent must not engage in discussion with the parent about it, or ask any questions, as this may hinder the local authority's safeguarding procedures.

- **Smoking**

Children under 5 years of age, or children and young people of any age who are disabled or may suffer from respiratory problems, asthma, glue ear, heart disease and other related health issues, may not be placed with foster parents who smoke cigarettes. This extends to Parent and Child placements.

Our Smoking Policy also applies the same rules to the use of electronic cigarettes, commonly referred to as 'vapes'. Our policy ensures that, in addition to protecting them from potentially-harmful substances, foster parents do not need to leave babies and young children unsupervised while they go outside the home to smoke or vape.

BAAF guidance argues that a person who has smoked should not be considered an 'ex-smoker' until they have ceased smoking for 12 months, and ISP adopts this guideline in our Smoking Policy.

It is acknowledged that some parents within a Parent and Child Placement may be smokers and this would need to be carefully managed. Both the foster parent and parent(s) must refer to ISP's Safer Sleep Procedure re keeping baby smoke-free day and night. Smoking is not permitted inside the foster parent's home. If a parent smokes it must be in a designated outside area, while the foster parent supervises the baby. On returning to the home, the parent must wash their hands before contact with their baby. Further guidance regarding a parent's handling of their child after smoking should be discussed with the health visitor.

- **Risk assessments**

In addition to the Parent and Child Placement Agreement, the agency will complete a Parent and Child Risk Assessment, ideally before the placement starts, or **within 7 days**, to ensure all known risks and behaviour are fully explored and understood by the agency and foster parents.

The supervising social worker, local authority social worker, foster parent and parent will all receive copies of the finalised Parent and Child Placement Agreement and Risk Assessment **within 10 days** from the commencement of placement.

The completion of the Parent and Child Risk Assessment is to be undertaken in consultation with the company's safeguarding and risk assessment policies.

The risk assessment will need to be reviewed and updated at every foster parent supervision and in the event of any incidents or concerns. Where a parent is thought to be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation then a CSE Risk Assessment should also be completed.

- **Visibility of the baby**

Parent and Child placements have the added complexity of requiring agencies and carers to manage and understand the needs of both the parent and the young child in placement. These needs can sometimes be competing, or the needs of the parent manifest more dominantly than the needs of the young child. Serious Case Reviews highlight that agencies can and do lose sight of the child in such circumstances.

To avoid this, the agency will encourage local authorities to hold **separate** care planning meetings for both the parent and the young child in placement and to view each as a unique placement.

Roles and Responsibilities

Foster parent

- The foster parent will, through their knowledge of attachment theory and practice, promote a secure attachment between the parent and child. The primary attachment the baby needs to make is with their parent.
- As some parents in Parent and Child placements are teenagers, the foster parent will need to offer parental care and guidance to the parent. This may include helping the parent to manage their own physical or mental health conditions and develop self-care skills for independence.
- The foster parent will provide information, advice and guidance to the parent in relation to the care and normal development of babies and young children. This will include feeding and safe sleep guidance. Foster parents will help the parent to understand our ***Safer Sleeping Guide*** for Parent and Child placements.
- If the parent has an identified learning disability, or requires additional help to understand verbal instructions and information, the foster parent will provide them with the agency's simplified resources, assist them in reading written information and take time to explain information and check that they understand.
- If there are any differences of opinion on childcare, the foster parent should record these in their daily log and discuss the matter with their supervising social worker, and other professionals such as the health visitor if necessary.
- The foster parent will respect and give recognition to the importance of a parent and child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, gender, sexuality and disability.
- The foster parent will attend pre-placement meetings, family centre service agreement meetings, reviews, core group meetings, planning meetings, child protection conferences and any other meetings required.
- Foster parents will work closely with health visitors and other health professionals.

- Foster parents will conduct physical checks in accordance with the local authority's requirements, and as agreed within the **Parent and Child Placement Agreement**. This will include bedroom checks to ensure that the baby's environment is healthy, safe and appropriately clean.
- The foster parent will record and report any child protection incidents and immediately ensure the safety of the child.
- The foster parent will be expected to keep a detailed written daily record noting observations of the parent's ability to respond to their baby's needs, manage their daily routine, and undertake the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform any parenting programme or assessment that has been agreed, and may be used in court proceedings. The foster parent will be expected to be open and honest about the parent's strengths and difficulties when recording their observations and the parent will be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations.

The parent will be asked to sign a log sheet each day to confirm that they have had the opportunity to read the daily record and add their comments. This log will be kept at the foster home and passed to ISP at the end of placement. If the parent declines to read the daily record, or to sign the log, then a note should be made to this effect within the daily record, and the placing local authority should be made aware as soon as possible.

The foster parent's roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined within the Parent and Child Placement Agreement and in the Local Authority Care Plan, including the degree of delegated authority permitted by the parent and placing local authority.

Supervising Social Worker

- All foster parents must be fully supported by a designated and experienced supervising social worker who will offer a minimum of one phone call a week and weekly visits until agreed otherwise in the social worker's supervision with their line manager.
- Social workers who are supervising Parent and Child placements must have attended the Parent and Child training course.
- If the parent has an identified learning disability, or requires additional help to understand verbal instructions and information, the supervising social worker will assist the foster parent in explaining information to them, and check that they understand.
- The supervising social worker will check the baby's sleeping arrangements at every weekly visit and ensure that safer sleeping guidance is being followed at all times.
- During supervision, supervising social workers and foster parents will explore the reflective element of the placement and ensure there is the opportunity to 'pick up' on cues, explore issues or concerns. The level of contact between the foster parent and their supervising social worker will be clearly determined and reflects the level of supervision these placements require.

- If the foster parent reports differences of opinion between themselves and the parent in terms of childcare practice, the supervising social worker should communicate this information to the local authority social worker at the earliest opportunity to ensure best practice and safe care.
- If the issues cannot be resolved through discussion, then the matter must be escalated by the social worker or foster parent to the appropriate agency manager who will take the matter forward with the local authority manager.

Parent(s)

- The parent is responsible for the health and wellbeing of their child, and is expected to follow advice that they are given and seek help when needed.
- The parent must permit the foster parent to have access to their room to carry out appropriate checks, e.g. cleanliness, health and safety.
- If there are other children in the household, the parent in placement must not provide any practical or supervisory care to those children.
- Smoking is not permitted inside the foster parent's home. If a parent smokes it must be in a designated outside area. On returning to the home, the parent must wash their hands before contact with their baby. Further guidance regarding a parent's handling of their child after smoking should be discussed with the health visitor.
- No involvement with any illegal substances is permitted in the foster parent's home. However, it is recognised that some parents may be supported in a parent and child placement whilst undergoing a treatment programme for substance or alcohol misuse, if this is the case controlled medications will need to be stored safely.
- The parent should inform the foster parent and child's social worker of any appointments, and check if childcare cover is required.

The parent's circumstances and history is strictly confidential to the named foster parent and not their family or friends. Parents can feel reassured that no discussions will take place between family members and friends.

The responsibilities of the parent must be clearly set out in the Parent and Child Placement Agreement and Local Authority Care Plan.

Parent contact

The agency is positive about contact but does not promote parent contact by the not-placed parent at the foster parent's home and will work closely with the local authority in identifying a suitable Contact Centre to manage potential risks. It may be possible to offer this facility at the agency's offices or other venues.

Agency resources to support the parent and the foster parent/s

The parent will be given a copy of ISP's Welcome Guide for Parent and Child Placements, and our Safer Sleeping Guide which summarises the agency's Safer Sleeping Procedure.

Additional guides to everyday parenting tasks (e.g. preparing a bottle, changing a nappy) are also available to support parents with learning difficulties.

During placement, our Life Skills Development Programme may be accessed in order to support young parents to develop their life skills alongside their parenting skills.

The parent and foster parent will have access to the agency's I-SPACE website, which is a hub of information and advice in relation to health, safety, life skills and leaving care. This website will signpost the reader to helpful online and community resources.

Other agency policies and documents

Parent and Child Placement Agreement
Parent and Child Risk Assessment
Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Risk Management
Child Specific Safer Caring Plan – birth to 3 years inclusive
Escalation on Care Documents Procedure
Safeguarding Policy
Safeguarding Children Procedure
Child Sexual Exploitation Assessment Tool Kit
Child Sexual Exploitation Practitioners Tool Kit
Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment
Assessing Prospective Foster Parents Procedure
Training Policy for Foster Parents
Supporting and Supervising Foster Parents Policy
Parent and Child Daily Feed Changing Diary
Parent and Child Daily Record
Record Keeping Policy for Foster Parents
Matching Procedures & Reports
Smoking Policy