

Parent and Child Specialist Fostering Scheme

Procedure for social work staff

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Author: Tracy Avill/Cathy Swanson

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Parent and Child Specialist Fostering Scheme is designed to provide an alternative to residential based parent and baby provision or placements within the independent sector. The scheme will develop the capacity to have both parents in placement where required and in exceptional circumstances older children.
- 1.2 This procedure is intended for all social work staff in Children and Families, fostering team and the independent reviewing officer service.
- 1.3 This procedure should usually be implemented following:
 - A pre-birth assessment; or
 - A children protection case conference which recommends a parent and child placement; or
 - At the direction of a court during care proceedings.
- 1.4 In exceptional circumstances, where the required assessments have not been completed, a clear plan, with timescales, must be agreed at the pre-placement agreement meeting for the completion of the assessment.
- 1.5 A parent and child specialist fostering arrangement will not be offered when neither the child nor the parent are in the care of the local authority.

2. Aim of the scheme and service outcomes

- 2.1 Parent and child specialist foster carers will be offered a salary of £538.4 per week (Jan 2019) and will offer a specialist foster home for a minimum of three parents and children over a 12-week assessment period within their home and community (unless a senior manager exceptionally agrees an extension). They will support other parent and child specialist foster carers when respite/support is required. All carers will be entitled to 28 days paid leave to be taken when the child leaves the specialist foster home.
- 2.2 The foster carer will contribute to the social worker's assessment for the court by providing daily observations and recording. The foster carer will educate, monitor, record and share their observations with the parent.
- 2.3 The foster carer can have their own children aged 7 years and upwards but no other children.

- 2.4 Parent and child specialist foster carers may have dual approval but only as respite carers. Any respite arrangement would not be made whilst a parent and child are in the parent and child specialist foster home. A special parent and child foster carer will offer a 12-week assessment to a parent and child within their home and community. The foster carer will educate, monitor, assess and build up community links with the parent. The foster carer can have their own children aged 7 years and upwards but no other children.
- 2.2 The desired service outcomes are:
- A reduction in the need for residential-based assessment or those provided by the independent fostering sector.
 - The provision of an alternative evidence-based parent and child assessment arrangement for families in the court arena or pre-proceedings.
 - Strong links to be made with community services as appropriate to inform the assessment and build on support to the parent.
 - For parents to be provided with consistent, nurturing and individualised support in an environment in which they can learn to parent safely and independently.
 - An environment that will be conducive to contact for the parent and child, with close extended family.

3. Service outline

- 3.1 This is a county wide scheme. The parent and child will be in the specialist foster carer's home for a 12-week period (unless senior managers agree an extension). The foster carers for the scheme will need to have the relevant skill set and one carer will have to be home based on a full-time basis.
- 3.2 Foster carers accepted for the scheme will complete specific training including the, recording, supporting parents/carers in early infancy and bespoke court training.
- 3.3 Each specialist arrangement will be underpinned by a clear written agreement that defines purpose of placement, roles, responsibilities and expectations. The scheme will allow for the needs of a young parent to be managed

appropriately. It will also accommodate parents who may have learning needs where the material will be adapted accordingly.

- 3.4 The substantive arrangements for these foster carers will be made on a planned basis following a referral being made to the Fostering Placement Hub with agreement of the Children's Team operations manager.

4. Eligibility criteria

- 4.1 [Public Law Outline](#) or legal processes have been initiated and the recommendation is for a parent and child assessment; or pre-proceedings the [Case Decision Meeting](#) has recommended an assessment of parental capacity. The parent and child arrangement has therefore been agreed as necessary and appropriate by legal services and the relevant service manager.
- 4.2 The local authority solicitor, in conjunction with the child's social worker, will issue a letter of instruction as to the requirements of the proposed arrangements and desired outcomes.
- 4.3 The specialist fostering arrangement may also be required to support a proposed rehabilitation plan for the parent and child together into the community. For an unborn child the pre-birth assessment will have concluded that it would be unsafe for a parenting capacity assessment to take place while the parent and child remain in their own home.

5. Referral process

- 5.1. All referrals to be agreed by the relevant service manager.
- 5.2 All referrals are to be made through the [Placement Hub](#) highlighting any potential risk factors and the suitability for a family based assessment.
- 5.3 The referral must include full information on parent(s) as for the court bundle as well as the child including:
- Pre-birth parenting assessment;
 - Psychological assessments;
 - History of any previous children;
 - Any history of offending, drug misuse (including hair strand test results), aggression.

- 5.4 The Schemes worker will complete a risk assessment and advise the Hub of the outcome. If the risk is assessed to be acceptable the schemes worker will liaise with the child's social worker regarding suitability and matching.
- 5.5 If a residential based assessment is required and agreed by service manager, then the brokers will complete the search and identify a suitable match.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The foster carer:

- should promote and support the key attachment between the child and parent.
- will provide guidance and assistance to the parent in managing the care tasks for the child. This may include: direct instruction or modelling, responding to questions, practical support such as accompanying the parent to parent/baby groups, health visiting clinic, shopping etc.
- will offer a safe and friendly environment in which to provide supervision and support to the parent, and to improve and build confidence in parenting skills. If the arrangement progresses positively it is expected that the parent demonstrates less reliance on the carers support.
- will keep a daily record noting observations of the parent's ability to: respond to their child's needs, manage the routine, and manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform any parenting programme or assessment that has been agreed. The foster carer(s) will be expected to be open and honest about the parent's strengths and difficulties when recording their observations and the parent must be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations with the support of the child's social worker.
- will provide 24-hour support when required as agreed within the pre-placement meeting and agreement.

6.2 The parent(s):

- will be expected to look after their child at all times (getting up, bathing, feeding, changing) under supervision from carer until it is agreed the supervision is no longer necessary.

- will be expected to manage the child's routines to fit in with the foster carer's household. It is the parent's responsibility to check on the child throughout the evening and during the night as required.
- will be expected to demonstrate their competence in attending to all their child's physical needs as well as interacting positively with their child.
- will be expected to shop, budget and cook for themselves and their child (most of the time) and will attend to all clothes washing and ironing. One of the aims will be for the parent to achieve greater independence and skill in these areas, as identified in the pre placement meeting and agreement. This is dependent upon the parent's ability and should be discussed in the pre-placement meeting.
- will keep their room tidy and leave the kitchen, bathroom and any other communal areas in a tidy, clean condition after use.
- will keep personal clothing and belongings their own room. The foster carer will not be responsible for property or articles that are lost or damaged.
- will contribute to the safety and wellbeing of everyone in the foster carer's home and in public by demonstrating appropriate behaviours.

6.3 The fostering social worker

- All parent and child specialist foster carers must be fully supported by a designated and experienced fostering social worker who will offer support and supervision. Any known or potential risks to the foster carer and their family from members of the child's family or others must be assessed.

6.4 The fostering social worker:

- will ensure that full information about the parent and child is passed on by the child's social worker (CSW) to the foster carer prior to the arrangement commencing. This will comprise, as a minimum, the placement request plus any other risk assessment. If this is not the case then the fostering social worker (FSW) should inform their manager, who will decide whether the arrangement should proceed or not.
- will attend the placement agreement meeting.
- will chair placement review meetings to be held fortnightly.
- will support, monitor and supervise the foster carers weekly.

- will work closely with the assessing social worker (undertaking the assessment) to support the foster carer to understand the task required of them and provide the best service to the parent and child arrangement.
- will ensure that the foster carers are appropriately trained and skilled; this will include information on the PAMS approach.

6.5 The fostering family support worker:

- will work with both the fostering social worker and assessing social worker to support both the foster carer and the parent.
- will support foster carers to complete their Training Support and Development Induction Standards.
- will offer telephone and support visits to the foster carer.
- will attend fortnightly reviews meetings.

6.6 The parent's support worker

- will work with the birth parent(s) according to the plan and visit weekly or if agreed fortnightly.
- will provide specific educational sessions as required according to the plan.
- will attend the progress meetings.
- will provide support after the placement has ended to the parent and child or just parent as agreed with the parent subject to regular review and management authorisation.

6.7 The Scheme Fostering Team Manager:

- will manage the referrals to the scheme including ensuring all the information is provided and that a risk assessment is completed by the FSW
- will chair the initial placement agreement meeting and negotiate the content of the agreement.
- will manage and monitor the progress of the assessment. For parenting assessments undertaken in legal proceedings the team manager will clarify

any requests made in the legal letter of instruction including the timescale for the assessment.

- will link with all involved professionals.
- will maintain the statutory duties of the Fostering Service
- will ensure that foster carers are supported and appropriately trained and skilled.

Some of the above tasks may be delegated to the FSW.

6.8 Role of the child's social worker:

- will visit the foster home regularly and make weekly phone/email contact
During these visits the child's social worker should discuss individually and together with parent and foster carer how the arrangement is going in relation to the agreement and provide the opportunity to share concerns/worries.
- will attend all the planning meetings and placement review meetings or ensure a representative attend instead.
- will check out any arranged appointments and childcare cover that needs to be approved by the carers and discussed with the SSW.
- will identify an assessing social worker prior to the start of the parent and child specialist fostering arrangement.
- will consider the second parent, and give attention and scrutiny to the parents' relationship, and to the second parent's involvement in the assessment process and future planning.

6.9 The assessing social worker:

- A parenting assessor will be allocated before or at the start of the arrangement.
- A designated team will complete the parenting assessment of the parent in the specialist foster home, building upon and analysing the evidence provided by the foster carer.
- will follow the requirements of the letter of instruction, where one is provided.

- will aim to undertake a minimum of weekly assessment visits to the parent and child in the specialist foster home.
- will discuss the foster carer's observations and records with the carer to inform the parenting assessment.
- will work closely with the child's and fostering social worker and attend fortnightly review meetings to include parent and carer.
- will contribute to core group meetings and children in care reviews.

7. Legal context

There are a number of legal scenarios that apply to parent and child fostering, with different implications depending on the regulations that apply. Careful consideration must be given to the legal status of the parent (if a minor) and the child. Consents must be obtained in writing where either is being accommodated under s20. There are four possible scenarios:

7.1. Parent in care, child in care (1)

- Where both the minor parent and the child are in care and placed with the carer (either with under care orders or s20), both will be subject to all the requirements of the: [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#); and the [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#).

7.2. Parent in care, child in care (2)

- Where during care proceedings a minor parent is placed in a foster home, and their child is subject to an interim care order and is placed with the minor parent under the placement with parents provisions, both will be subject to the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) but the [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#) will apply only to the parent.

7.3. Parent in care, child not in care

- During care proceedings it could be that a child of a minor parent in care is living with them in the care of their parent but without being in the care of the authority themselves. In this case the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) and [the Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#) will apply only to the parent.

7.4. Parent not in care, child in care

- In this situation the parent could be either under or over the age of 18, and only the child will be subject to all the requirements of the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) and the [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#). The regulations in relation to placement with parents will not apply, and the parent will be considered as part of the fostering household.
- In this situation the minor parent, is not subject to a care order or interim care order, and is not accommodated under s20(1), (3) or (4). Case law has established that in situations where a duty to provide accommodation has arisen under s20(1) or s20(3) and is actually provided then that accommodation is almost always provided under s20 not s17. Where there is no duty to provide accommodation arising under s20(1) or s20(3) then the minor parent might be being provided with accommodation under s20(4) if to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare.
- A duty to provide accommodation would arise under s20(1) when the minor parent is assessed as being 'in need' and appears to require accommodation as a result of:
 - (a) there being no person who has parental responsibility for [them]
 - (b) being lost or having been abandoned; or
 - (c) the person who has been caring for him/her being prevented (whether permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him/her with suitable accommodation or care.
- A duty to provide accommodation would arise under s20(3) where the minor parent who is 16 or 17 is assessed as being 'in need' and their welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they were not provided with accommodation.
- S20 relies upon the agreement of either the young parent themselves (if they are 16+) or their own parents'.

8. Financial arrangements

- 8.1 The weekly fee of £538.44 (2019) is set to reflect the demands and requirements of the fostering arrangement). Aligned to the existing payment for skills scheme this equates to a skills level 3 payments for the parent and a skills level 2 payments for the baby/child. Fostering allowances also apply when a child or parent is in care. Where there are 2 parents the cost increases accordingly depending on the status of the other parent. Where the parent and/or child are not in care the cost is less as there will be benefit contributions. See [Guidance on the Skill Level Scheme](#).
- 8.2 When the parent and child are in care the foster carer will receive the fostering allowances in respect of both the parent and their child. For further information on allowances see [Foster Carer's Financial Handbook](#)
- 8.3 Where the child only is in care and the parent is 18 years plus, the foster carer will receive the fostering allowance in respect of the child.
- 8.4 Where the parent is under 18 and not in care but the child is in the care of the authority, the financial arrangement will be as for an 18-year-old (see below).
- 8.5 Where the parent is over 18 years old but was previously in care by the same foster carer, [Staying Put procedures](#) apply.
- 8.6 Where the parent is over 18 years old, but not previously in care by the same foster carer a total of £180 will be paid.
- 8.7 Where the parent is eligible to claim housing benefit and/or income support or is working they will make the same contribution as is required under [Staying Put procedures](#).
- 8.8 Any balance of the £180 total payment not met by housing benefit or the parent will be met by the children's team responsible for the child placed.
- 8.9 Where 2 parents are placed in the household for assessment the carer will receive the same amount for each parent as outlined above.
- 8.10 Where one parent only is in care (the child is in the same foster home but is not in care), the foster carer will receive the fostering allowance in respect of the parent. In respect of the child the foster carer will receive:
- 50% of their fee from [Section 17](#) paid for by the relevant children's team.

- The full fostering allowances minus any benefits that the parent will receive in respect of their child.
- 8.11 Parents contribute £20.00 each per week to the foster carer. The allocated child's social worker will advise the parent of benefits they can claim for example, housing and child benefit.
- 8.12 A foster carer may agree to continue caring for the child on a mainstream time limited basis if the parent and child arrangement is not successful. This needs to be agreed by the fostering and children's team operations manager and the foster carers will receive the usual allowances and level 2 skill fee.
- 8.13 Foster carers will only be indemnified in respect of those children in the care of WCC. They will not be indemnified for liabilities in respect of the parents, irrespective of their age and it is, therefore, important that the foster carers notify their insurers of the arrangements to ensure their own personal liability cover applies. See [foster carer insurance guidance](#).
- 8.14 The council will be indemnified for its legal liabilities in respect of both children in care and children not in the care of WCC and, of course, the foster carers themselves.

9. Foster carer training and support

- 9.1 The foster carers will receive a heightened level of support from the dedicated fostering social worker/social care worker (schemes) and will have completed the following training within the first 24 months of approval:
- Understanding addiction;
 - Child development (online);
 - Attachment;
 - Recording skills;
 - Child protection and safeguarding;
 - Positively working with birth parents;
 - Court work skills (online);
 - Early Infancy training;
- 9.2 Following training, carers will complete the remainder of the core training courses (equality and diversity, making placements work and first aid training) and their training, support and development (TSD) standards workbook. Foster carers will also be expected to complete the City and Guilds, Level 3 Diploma.

- 9.3 Foster carers will receive a standard induction and understand and follow the guidance issued from health. A visit will be undertaken to the foster home by the health visitor/Family Nurse Partnership to ensure that the foster carer is supporting the parent in following the most up to date health and parenting advice. This will ensure that consistent advice is provided to the parent/s.

10. Ending a parent and child specialist fostering arrangement

- 10.1 When the arrangement is planned to end, consideration should be given to financial issues e.g. whether any unspent allowances are to be returned, or used to support the parent in setting up a home etc. Where the parent leaves the child, or the plan is for the child to be cared for by someone outside the birth family, a careful transition plan is to be put into place with the carer taking on the main caring role for as long as may be required to enable this plan to be put into place. In some circumstances the court will need to be assured that there is no unnecessary disruption to the child's care.
- 10.2 Future support needs for the parent should be planned with other statutory agencies, particularly health. If the parent is under 18 considerations will have already been given to their legal status, and this may need to be reviewed in line with the [Warwickshire's Joint Protocol for managing and assessing the housing needs of homeless young people](#). The child's social worker should liaise with the local housing officer if it is necessary to identify suitable housing.
- 10.3 The legal status of the child should be clear to their parent and information given about any relevant supervision and support.
- 10.4 A parent and child carer is expected to give 28 days' notice of intention to end the arrangement as for other carers.
- 10.5 Disruptions – WCC acknowledge that some foster care arrangements may end in an unplanned way. The foster carer needs to inform social care of any issues and a placement stability meeting will be held to allow for planning. A disruption meeting will be held in line with fostering procedures.

11. Further information

[Fostering guidance and procedures](#)

[Guidance on the Skill Level Scheme.](#)

[Section 17 Finances](#)

[Foster Carer's Financial Handbook](#)

[Staying Put procedures](#)

[Warwickshire's Joint Protocol for managing and assessing the housing needs of homeless young people.](#)

[Dealing with Allegations, Complaints, and Causes for Concern against Foster Carers](#)

11. Assessment templates

[Parent and Child Assessment Specialist Fostering Scheme](#)

[Post Birth Assessment](#)