

# **Solo Placement Scheme Procedure**

Version: 0.4

Date issue: March 2018

Date of review: September 2019

Team: Children and Families

Protective Marking: Internal

## **Contents**

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Context .....	3
3. Recruitment and training of foster carers.....	4
4. Placement referral process and placement arrangements .....	5
5. Post placement support.....	7
6. Step down to mainstream fostering .....	8
7. Further Information .....	9

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Solo placement scheme is designed to support a child/young person who is in residential care or who is comprehensively assessed as ready to step down and wish to be safely and appropriately cared for within a local family placement or who would otherwise need to be placed in residential care and meet all or most of the criteria below:
- 1.2 ***'A Solo placement is where a child or young person is living with foster carers and is the only child/young person in placement. The carer(s) will not have any other children living at home. To access this scheme, the social work assessment must confirm that the child/young person has complex needs that can only be met if they are the only child/young people in placement. There will also be a heightened level of foster care support and availability to respond to the child/young person's needs. A Solo placement will initially be for 12 months.'***
- 1.3 This procedure is intended for all social work staff in Children Safeguarding and Support, fostering and the Independent Reviewing Service. This procedure should be used when moving a child/young person into a Solo fostering placement.
- 1.4 Reviews will take place annually and will inform future developments.

# 2. Context

- 2.1 The Solo placement scheme is aimed at reducing the use of residential care for children/young people with complex needs. The child/young person's wishes and feelings should be considered at all stages. The foster carers on the scheme will be home based and expected to provide high levels of time and care to the child/young person placed. The Solo foster carer job description specifies the tasks and expectations.
- 2.2 The National Minimum Foster Care Standards and related statutory guidance apply to the scheme. Solo placement carers will be remunerated for 52 weeks of the year and their fees and allowances will be reviewed annually. The fostering service remunerate the carers from the point of approval and for any periods when they are without a placement, providing they are available to take a placement under the [Short Team Emergency Placement schemes \(STEPS\)](#) or [Emergency](#)

[Duty Fostering Scheme](#). The relevant Children's Safeguarding and Support team will meet the fees from the point at which it is agreed that the child/young person is to be placed. Fostering allowances will be paid from the point of placement.

2.3 The child/young person must be in residential care or being referred for residential care and satisfy all or most of the following criteria:

- a history of sexually inappropriate behaviour (SIBS) which makes it inappropriate for them to be placed with other children or young people;
- levels of self-harm requiring high levels of carer supervision and support;
- alcohol and substance abuse/misuse to a degree which impacts negatively on other children;
- a history of physical violence towards other children;
- a degree of relationship difficulties e.g. severe attachment difficulties, which require higher levels of attention, supervision and intervention from the carer.

2.4 In all cases service manager approval is required for a referral to be made to or withdrawn from the Solo Placement Scheme.

### **3. Recruitment and training of foster carers.**

3.1 Foster carers are recruited specifically for the scheme and are not accessed through the usual fostering duty and referral process.

3.2 However in the event that a carer on the scheme does not have a placement or is not matched to a young person, [Short Team Emergency Placement schemes \(STEPS\)](#) or Emergency Duty Fostering placement may be made. This will be subject to the agreement of the fostering operations manager. There will be an expectation that the Solo foster carer will accept a placement where professionals feel it is an appropriate match, unless clear risks and vulnerabilities are identified.

- 3.3 The carers 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 12 months of approval:
- Child protection;
  - Caring for teens;
  - Making placements work;
  - Managing challenging behaviour and safe caring skills;
  - Recording skills;
  - Understanding and working with young people with attachment difficulties.
- 3.4 Following training, carers will complete the remainder of the core training courses (equality and diversity and first aid training) and their training, support and development (TSD) standards workbook. Carers will also be expected to complete the City and Guilds, Level 3 Diploma.

## **4. Placement referral process and placement arrangements**

- 4.1 All placements will:
- be planned, matched and have a clear introduction plan.
  - be for 12 months in the first instance;
  - have an exit plan in place at the point of referral.
  - be subject to a review at 9 months when next step planning will be considered.
- 4.2 Children/young people who are being considered for the Solo placement scheme should be counselled about the placement being for up to 12 months initially.
- 4.3 The placement review will be chaired by the children team operations manager at 9 months. Service manager agreement is required if the recommendation from the review is that the placement should be extended beyond 12 months.
- 4.4 A referral to the Solo scheme will require the approval of the children's team operations manager, and agreement by the service manager. The service manager will record this as key decision on the child/young person's case record. The completed referral form and child's profile and any other relevant reports e.g. psychological reports on the child must be sent to the Fostering Hub and shared with the prospective

Solo carer by their fostering social worker (FSW) This should provide a comprehensive picture of the young person's needs.

- 4.4 The fostering scheme team manager will decide whether the child/young person meets the criteria for the scheme. If the criteria are not met or there are no vacancies, the fostering team manager will inform the Hub.
- 4.5 Where the referral is appropriate:
- The fostering team manager (TM) and fostering social worker (FSW) will have an initial meeting/discussion with the social worker for the child/young person.
  - The FSW will discuss the referral, child's profile and other specialist reports with the potential foster carer.
  - The child social worker (CSW) and FSW will assess the child/young person's needs against the carer's skills, strengths and competencies using the matching matrix. Areas of support/services will be identified at this point.
- 4.6 If the child/young person is an independent specialist placement or requires an alternative to mainstream education, or a school placement/provision closer to the foster carer's home, a discussion will take place with the head of SENDAR or [Virtual School](#) head teacher so that arrangements can be made to access the appropriate educational placement, with support in timely way.
- 4.7 Where the decision is to proceed with a placement the fostering team manager will ensure:
- that all necessary pre-placement planning meetings take place;
  - that there is a strategy to access social, educational, health, psychological services and targeted youth support for the young person;
  - invite the educational psychologist to any planning meetings if independent specialist provision is in place and where up to date information is available;
  - invite the current and new LAC teachers from the educational provision to all key planning meetings.

- 4.8 The transition of a child/young person from residential care or another foster carer to a Solo foster carer requires careful planning and the full engagement of the child/young person concerned. The child/young person should experience a planned and careful introduction to the placement and local support services including educational provision. This can include the foster carer visiting the residential unit /foster carer with the social worker and thereafter as part of the agreed introductions plan.
- 4.9 Approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to commencement of the proposed placement the fostering team manager will chair a **Review Professionals Meeting**. This will include the foster carer, and all services that have been involved or will be involved in supporting the proposed placement in future. This meeting will finalise the placement plan.

## 5. Post placement support

- 5.1 The CSW and the assigned FSW/SCW will visit the placement weekly. They will liaise with each other on a regular basis and alert any professionals involved to any issues/concerns as they arise.
- 5.2 The foster carer will be provided with a minimum of monthly supervision or more frequently if required.
- 5.3 There is a requirement that a **Professionals Meeting**:
- is held on a 2/3 weekly basis with all those involved to monitor the placement, recognise progress and address any difficulties or issues;
  - will be convened by the fostering team manager The frequency of these meetings will be adjusted according to the needs of the placement;
  - is held at 9 months with all professionals, including a representative from Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review (SENDAR) or the [Virtual School](#) to consider/review if the criteria for the Solo placement are still met or to discuss the exit plan for the young person. Arrangements will be co-ordinated with all services where the move is agreed, as appropriate.
- 5.4 The statutory Looked After Review meetings will continue alongside the professional meetings, with the meetings being held concurrently where appropriate and to avoid duplication of meetings.

- 5.5 Due to the high level of need of the children referred, it is recognised that Solo carers will need time to “recharge their batteries”  
Solo carers are entitled to request up to 2 weeks a year as planned respite, the child/young person will be linked to one or two STEPS or other carers who they will know.
- 5.6 If the placement disrupts, the foster carers will be required to give 28 days’ notice of their intention to end the placement. This is in line with Fostering Standards and the Foster Carer Service Agreement. A formal disruption meeting will be completed within the notice period or within 2 weeks of the young person leaving the placement. The meeting will give consideration to the foster carers’ ongoing suitability for the scheme and their training and learning needs.
- 5.7 The foster carers will receive their fee for no more than a 2 week period once a child/young person has left the placement unless they take STEPS or go on the ED rota (see section 2.2). It is expected that the carers would accept another placement within this period or that their approval status will have been reviewed. In this case they have the option to step down to mainstream foster care or to another fostering scheme.
- 5.8 Solo carers are expected to make their own arrangements for insurance to cover sickness. In the event of an allegation, the Solo carer will continue to receive the fee for 2 weeks as outlined in the [Allegations, Causes for Concern and Complaints against Warwickshire County Council Foster Carers.](#)

## **6. Step down to mainstream fostering**

- 6.1 Discussions should take place at the professionals meeting within 12 months or at the point where it is assessed that the child/young person no longer requires a Solo placement. There will be a general expectation that a mainstream fostering placement would be sought for the child/young person unless rehabilitation becomes the plan.
- 6.2 In exceptional circumstances, and where the Solo criteria are fully or partially met, it might be in the best interests of the child/young person to remain in the placement on a Solo basis. This will need to be considered through Looked After Children (LAC) review process and will require service manager agreement. This decision should be



recorded as a key decision on the child/young person's case file. This will be subject to further reviews every 6 months

- 6.3 Where the child/young person no longer meets the criteria for a Solo placement and is to remain in placement, the foster carer can agree to change their approval category to mainstream fostering at skill level 2. In such circumstances the foster carer may consider the placement of other children.

## **7. Further Information**

- 7.1 For further information please contact

Cathy Swanson  
Schemes Team Manager  
Telephone: 01926 743092  
Email: [cathyswanson@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cathyswanson@warwickshire.gov.uk)

or

Tracy Avill  
Operations Manager Fostering Services  
Saltisford Office Park  
Building One, First Floor  
Ansell Way  
Warwick  
CV34 4UL  
Telephone: 01926 742573  
Email: [tracyavil@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:tracyavil@warwickshire.gov.uk)