

# Alternative Care Arrangements Policy

## Introduction

There will be occasions when a foster parent will need to leave a young person in the care of someone else, for a short period of time.

This policy considers the various types of 'alternative care' arrangements that might be made, i.e. when an adult other than the foster parent is responsible for the welfare of the child, and provides guiding principles when making such decisions.

We recognise the importance of balancing the local authority's duty of care with the need to offer the child a 'normal' experience of family and social life. Children in foster care should, as far as possible, and with adequate safeguards, be allowed to take part in age-appropriate social activities, such as sleepovers and holiday clubs. Such decisions are usually taken by the foster parent, under delegated authority arrangements, and the overriding principle should be that arrangements for alternative care should be the same as if it were for the foster parent's own birth child. There may, however, be circumstances under which the local authority's consent to an activity must be obtained. Delegated authority arrangements should be discussed within placement planning meetings, and recorded in the child's Placement Plan.

Refer to the Delegated Authority to Foster Parents policy for more information.

## Social activities

Children and young people may, from time to time, ask to take part in social events such as:

- Going to a friend's house after school;
- Going on a day trip with a friend and their family;
- Attending a friend's party;
- Sleepovers at a friend's house;

Unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why these activities should not take place, children should be given permission to join in with social activities with their peers.

Even if the decision has been made under delegated authority arrangements, if it involves an overnight stay, or travel away from the home area (e.g. day trip by train, visit to a theme park), the child's social worker should be notified of the activity. Social activities should be recorded on the child's Charms 'progress' record, and mentioned in the carer log. In the event of any difficulties during activities, these should be discussed in foster parent supervision and with the child's social worker to inform future decision making.

## **Guidance for foster parents:**

When making a decision, consider the following questions:

- Is the child physically able to participate in the activity?
- Will the child enjoy the activity, and cope with any strong emotions it may create?
- Is the venue safe?
- Will there be adequate adult supervision?
- How will the child get there and back again?
- Do you know the adults who will be responsible for the child's wellbeing, and have you shared contact details in case of difficulties/emergency?
- Does the child wish to participate, and do they feel safe with the arrangements?

If you have concerns, it may be necessary for you to be present during the activity, or for arrangements to be made for you to join the activity if needed, or take the child home early. Discuss with the child what they might need from you, or other adults, to join in with the activity safely and comfortably.

Also discuss with the child any information that you would need to share with the adults supervising the activity to enable them to look after the child. This would include relevant health problems, especially if the child carries an asthma pump or EpiPen.

## **School 'wraparound' care**

Some schools offer 'breakfast club' and 'after school club' for families who need it. These activities are usually within the school premises, but often managed and staffed by a separate organisation.

If a child's friends attend these activities, they might also ask to participate. There may also be occasions when foster parents need to make use of them, e.g. if children attend different schools and need dropping off and picking up at similar times.

The staff at these settings will all have a DBS check, and many will be familiar to the child if they work at the school. The child may be particularly comfortable with such care in familiar surroundings.

Foster parents who need to use these services should discuss this with their supervising social worker and the child's social worker to ensure that everyone is happy with the arrangements. Foster parents are expected to meet the cost of this provision.

## **Babysitting (not overnight)**

As part of the fostering assessment, prospective foster parents identify members of their support network whom children may visit, go on outings with, or who may care for the foster parent's own children. It is preferred that these people be the main source of alternative child care, including babysitting. Foster parents might also consider reciprocal

arrangements with other foster families in order to ensure that the child enjoys consistent safe care.

If alternative babysitters are required, this should be discussed at foster parent supervision. It is in the child's interests for babysitting to be provided by familiar people, with whom they can build a relationship and feel safe. Choice of babysitter will consider the child's needs as well as the age and experience of the proposed babysitter.

**When considering a babysitter, take the following factors into account:**

- The age of the babysitter;  
**N.B. babysitters must always be over 18**
- How much experience they have;
- How well you and the child know them;
- The vulnerability of the child or young person;
- The health needs of the child, and complexity of their needs.

**Important notes:**

- Babysitters should never be chosen through social media enquiries or advertising.
- Babysitters who provide care for 3 or more days per month will need to have a DBS check. ISP will arrange this.
- The babysitter must always be provided with:
  - Contact details for the foster parent
  - Contact details for ISP and our Out of Hours Service should there be an emergency and they cannot make contact with the foster parent.

Foster parents may be permitted to leave some older young people on their own for a short period of time. The young person's social worker will need to give prior agreement to this happening, and the boundaries of the agreement set out in the young person's risk assessment.

Foster parents are expected to meet the costs of babysitting arrangements.

Overnight care is arranged through our respite care procedures. See the Respite Policy for more details. Members of the foster parent's support network may be assessed to become an accredited carer (also known as FFMRC – Friend/Family Member Respite Carer) and provide respite for the family. Care provided under approved respite arrangements is paid by ISP.

**Monitoring Arrangements**

All alternative care arrangements should be reviewed regularly within foster parent supervision, and discussed during the foster parent's annual review.