

Placement in Foster Care Policy and Procedures

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

Placements will only be made with foster parents who have been approved by ISP, and within their terms of approval

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 parent'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 ISP 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;
- ISP 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 \(2015\)](#)

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1. Initial Referral Process

The Agency will only accept referrals for placements from Local Authority Commissioning Teams. Referring local authorities are requested to provide the following information:

- 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 those of relevant others.

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

Any information that is not provided within those timescales will be requested from the Commissioning Team or the child's Social Worker/Social Work Manager. If it is still not provided, the name of the child's Independent Reviewing Officer may be requested and they may be contacted to assist in obtaining the necessary information.

It is important that ISP and the foster parent have all necessary information about the child and their family to provide a safe environment for the child and others in the household.

ISP provides emergency and planned placements for children aged 0 - 18, including respite placements.

2. Matching Process

ISP will consider and respond to referrals immediately, and liaise with the referring local authority as necessary. As part of this exchange, information about proposed foster parents will be provided to the referring local authority in order to consider whether the foster family 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.

All children will live in a home with key basic safety equipment; those children with enhanced care or mobility needs will have access to agreed and specific equipment in a timely manner and with no unnecessary delay. The need and priority to source any specific safety equipment is based on a child's individual needs and will always be given full consideration.

Each child over 3 will have their own bedroom or, where this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom will be agreed by the placing local authority.

In accordance with ISP's Safer Sleeping Procedure, babies must sleep in the foster parent's bedroom until they are at least 6 months old, or in their parent's bedroom in the case of Parent and Child Placements.

Children under 5, or 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 a referring local authority may make an exception 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 (N.B if a child in Year 10 or 11 is moving to a placement which will disrupt their 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 parent's 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 foster parent'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 parent's own children and other family members.

All the various parties involved in the matching process should provide feedback to the proposed foster parent and their Registered Manager with any problems and gaps identified between the needs of the child and the foster parent's ability to meet them. If it is felt that these issues can be resolved, an action plan should be agreed between the placing local authority, ISP, the foster parent and their supervising social worker. ISP will not propose a placement if the assessed needs of the child cannot, with support, be provided by the proposed foster family.

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

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

N.B. Foster parent profiles must be kept up to date with any changes, as children will be matched to foster families based on current and significant information. This is the responsibility of the Supervising Social Worker.

With an up-to-date profile, the children's social worker will be able to show the child an accurate picture of where they are going to be staying by best describing the foster parents, the household and the environment which can help a child to feel reassured about this move.

3. Placement Process

3.1 Placement Planning

Once a decision has been made to place a child, a pre-placement planning meeting should take place between the foster parent, their supervising social worker and the placing local authority. If appropriate the child and their 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 days of the child coming into placement.

The main purpose of the planning meeting is to share full information about the child with the foster parent, and agree the contents of the Placement Plan. This 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 authority 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 parent 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 needs of those over 16;
- Regularity of visits from the child'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;
- The development of life skills, and (where relevant) preparation for independence, including the Pathway Plan;
- The steps that ISP 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 parent.

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 joining their new foster family - 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 Care Plan Review reports, Pathway Plan, Personal Education Plan, reports from specialists or therapists.

3.2 Placement Preparation

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

Once a foster family has been identified, the Supervising Social Worker will ensure that the child has a copy of the most relevant Children's Guide, which will be available in another format if required. The guide provides details regarding the Complaints Procedure for Children and Young People. The agency's Compliments, Complaints and Representations Procedure should be made available to the placing local authority and the child's parents.

Wherever possible, arrangements should be made for the child to visit the foster home prior to moving. If this is not possible, arrangements may be made for the foster family to visit the child; or, as a minimum, for information about the foster family 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 moving 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 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 parent and their 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

ISP may provide a copy of the foster family's Welcome Book and Household Safe Caring Plan to the placing local authority for the child's social worker to share relevant information with the child prior to the child meeting the foster family. Wherever possible there should be a period of introductions between the child and the foster family.

This should involve the following:

- The child receiving information about the foster home including a Welcome Book of the foster family and members of their household and family network and;
- A meeting between the child and the foster family, 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 the placement is confirmed.

Throughout the introduction process, foster parents will discuss issues with the child regarding routines within the home, information about bedtimes, meals, visitors, pocket

money (the amount of pocket money will be in line with the placing authority's 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.

A member of the regional ISP team should visit and meet the child within 5 working days of the start of placement. Thereafter, children will be seen alone at least four times a year, and at least once every 90 days. At least one visit a year will be conducted by the supervising social worker.

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. ISP will also send notifications in regard to placements with foster parents.

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 Authority, 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 be necessary for the foster parent to ensure that the child is registered with a GP, dentist and optician, either retaining existing practices or in the area they have moved to. 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 in care, 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 parent and will be covered in the Placement Plan.

4. Ending Placements and Placement Moves Within the Agency

ISP will not give notice to end a placement 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 Policy**.

If the placing authority is proposing to end the placement for reasons other than those stated above, ISP will notify the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

Whenever a placement move is being considered, the wishes and feelings of the child must be sought and considered. Where their wishes and feelings are not being observed the reasons for this must be explained to them. Children should not move 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.

A move to another foster family within the agency is treated as a move to a new placement.

Foster parents will be encouraged, wherever possible, to be able to keep in contact with children and young people who have moved on.