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Fostering Service

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Buddy Scheme

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**Introduction**

South Gloucestershire Fostering Service has been running a fostering buddy scheme for many years. Helping new carers to feel supported and more confident in carrying out the very important tasks they do to help vulnerable children is really important.

We know that new foster carers really appreciate having an experienced foster carer supporting them in their first year of fostering, and the “old hands” who have been buddies benefit too as it helps develop their practice as they share their wisdom and experience.

We are recruiting more and more foster carers and because we know having a buddy helps new carers so much, we have developed the scheme further with greater clarity about what is involved; what buddies will be asked to do and what support they can expect from the Fostering Service in return. We want to give everyone the opportunity to be a buddy during the course of their fostering career.

The criteria of fostering buddies are set out in the attached job description including details of the fees that will be paid. The other appendices to this document include:

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| --- | --- |
| **Appendix** | **Document** |
| Appendix 1 | Job description for mainstream carer buddies |
| Appendix 2 | Job description for connected carer buddies |
| Appendix 3 | Contract for mainstream carer buddies |
| Appendix 4 | Contract for connected carer buddies |
| Appendix 5 | Expression of interest to join buddy scheme |

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**Appendix 1**

**Fostering Buddy – Mainstream Carers**

**Job Description:**

The fostering Buddy needs to have met the criteria set out below and to have been interviewed for the role.

**Criteria:**

* Buddies will have fostered for at least 3 years
* Be operating as Band 3 carers.
* Have completed TSD standards and all core skills.
* Maintain expectations regarding ongoing training required of band 3 carers.

**Role Requirements:**

* Support to begin part way through the assessment, prior to the fostering panel and for a period of 1 year after approval
* Buddy to make contact with applicants/new carers they are buddying to introduce themselves prior to fostering panel, this should be a face-to-face meeting
* Following approval maintain a minimum monthly telephone/face to face contact, more if required
* Buddies to encourage new carers to attend training and other fostering activities and events and offer to go with them if possible
* Both parties need to be regularly discussing this agreement within their own supervision to review the effectiveness of the arrangement
* At the end of the new carer’s first year of fostering the manager of the scheme will contact the people who have been buddied to seek feedback on how well supported they have felt and how they have used the support offered
* The fostering buddy will also be contacted to ascertain how they have found the experience of buddying
* If either the fostering buddy or the new carer has any issues they feel need to be raised these should be brought to the manager’s attention at the time and should not be left until the end of the buddying period
* The buddy scheme manager will write a brief report on the fostering buddy to be attached to their annual review highlighting strengths and any areas for development
* It is envisaged that the fostering buddy will have up to a maximum of 4 links at any one time. This can be negotiated according to the fostering buddy’s availability and how busy they are with their own caring responsibilities
* If for any reason buddies feel unable to continue with a link this should be discussed with the manager of the scheme
* Buddies to attend group supervision with the Buddy scheme manager as required. Usually, 4 times a year
* Buddies will be provided with training /guidance on how to support new carers to complete the TSD Induction standards
* Buddies will attend training on Allegations and Signs of Safety
* Buddies are entitled to decide to step down from their buddying role but it is expected that they will fulfil the requirements of any existing links that have been made unless there are exceptional circumstances which should be discussed with the Buddy scheme manager

**Fees subject to the above requirements being fully met:**

£100.00 per link payable as follows:

£20.00 when a link with a new carer is made (usually towards the end of the fostering assessment).

£30.00 when a new carer is approved at South Gloucestershire Fostering Panel

£50 following the new carers’ first annual review and positive feedback received. If the support offered does not meet the expectations of the scheme then the final payment will not be made.

* Should additional specific support be required to support the new carer(s) additional payments may be negotiated at the buddy scheme manager’s discretion
* Buddies may claim mileage for trips made in connection with the buddy scheme.

If either carer has concerns that need to be shared with the Supervising Social worker, the other party must be informed first that this will happen unless this could compromise a child or young person’s safety.

**Appendix 2**

**Fostering Buddy - Connected Carers**

**Job Description:**

The fostering Buddy needs to have met the criteria set out below and to have been interviewed for the role.

**Criteria:**

* Buddies will have been assessed and approved as connected carers or have been granted an SGO
* Ideally have completed TSD standards and all core skills\*
* Maintain expectations regarding ongoing training required of carers\*

**Role Requirements:**

* Support to begin part way through the assessment, prior to the fostering panel or when a child is about to be placed under temporary approval. Support to continue for a period of 1 year after approval if new carers are still fostering. If an SGO is granted in the course of this year carers can still receive support from their buddy for the remainder of the year if they wish this to continue
* Buddy to make contact with applicants/new carers they are buddying to introduce themselves prior to fostering panel, or placement of child(ren), ideally this should be a face-to-face meeting
* Following first contact buddies should maintain a minimum monthly telephone/face to face contact, more if required
* Buddies to encourage new carers to attend training and other fostering activities and events including Launch Pad and offer to go with them if possible
* Both parties need to be regularly discussing this agreement within their own supervision\* to review the effectiveness of the arrangement
* At the end of the new carer’s first year of fostering or end of the support period if SGO has already been obtained, the manager of the scheme will contact the people who have been buddied to seek feedback on how well supported they have felt and how they have used the support offered
* The fostering buddy will also be contacted to ascertain how they have found the experience of buddying
* If either the fostering buddy or the new carer has any issues they feel need to be raised these should be brought to the manager’s attention at the time and should not be left until the end of the buddying period
* The buddy scheme manager will write a brief report on the fostering buddy to be attached to their annual review\* highlighting strengths and any areas for development
* It is envisaged that the fostering buddy will have up to a maximum of 4 links at any one time. This can be negotiated according to the fostering buddy’s availability and how busy they are with their own caring responsibilities
* If for any reason buddies feel unable to continue with a link this should be discussed with the manager of the scheme
* Buddies to be given the opportunity to attend group supervision with the Buddy scheme manager as required. Usually, 4 times a year
* Buddies will be provided with training /guidance on how to support new carers to complete the TSD Induction standards
* Buddies will attend training on Allegations and Signs of Safety
* Buddies are entitled to decide to step down from their buddying role but it is expected that they will fulfil the requirements of any existing links that have been made unless there are exceptional circumstances which should be discussed with the Buddy scheme manager

*\*Where buddies have an SGO then supervision visits and training are not required or mandatory, however training is still available to Special Guardians if they wish to attend. As buddies they would be expected to encourage new carers to attend.*

**Fees subject to the above requirements being fully met:**

£100.00 per link payable as follows:

£20.00 when a link with a new carer is made (usually when the fostering/SGO assessment has been partially completed).

£30.00 when a new carer is approved at South Gloucestershire Fostering Panel or temporary approval is granted to enable a child to be placed.

£50 following the new carers’ first annual review and positive feedback received. If the support offered does not meet the expectations of the scheme then the final payment will not be made.

* Should additional specific support be required to support the new carer(s) additional payments may be negotiated at the buddy scheme manager’s discretion
* Buddies may claim mileage for trips made in connection with the buddy scheme

If either carer has concerns that need to be shared with the Supervising Social worker, the other party must be informed first that this will happen unless this could compromise a child or young person’s safety.

**Appendix 3**

**BUDDYING SCHEME AGREEMENT**

**BETWEEN**: South Gloucestershire Fostering Service, South Gloucestershire Council

**AND** Foster Carer(s) (Buddy)

**ADDRESS**:

**TELEPHONE**: **E-MAIL:**

The above named carer undertakes to provide support under the buddying scheme to –

**NEW CARERS NAME:**

**NEW CARERS ADDRESS:**

**TELEPHONE: E-MAIL:**

**Requirements:**

* Support to begin part way through the assessment, prior to the fostering panel and for a period of 1 year after approval
* Buddy to make contact prior to fostering panel, ideally this should be a face-to-face meeting
* Following approval monthly telephone/face to face contact, more if required
* Buddies to encourage new carers to attend training and other events and offer to go with them if possible. Support and encourage completion of Training Support and Development standards
* Both parties need to be regularly discussing this agreement within their own supervision to review the effectiveness of the arrangement
* Maintain strict confidentiality

**Fee subject to the above requirements being fully met:**

£100.00 per link payable as follows:

£20.00 when a link with a new carer is made (usually towards the end of the assessment).

£30.00 when a new carer is approved at South Gloucestershire Fostering Panel

£50 following the new carers’ first annual review and positive feedback given

If either carer has concerns that need to be shared with the Supervising Social worker, the other party must be informed first that this will happen unless this could compromise a child or young person’s safety.

**SIGNED Fostering Buddy**: **DATE:**

**SIGNED (Team Manager/Senior Social Worker): DATE:**

**Appendix 4**

**CONNECTED CARERS’ BUDDYING SCHEME AGREEMENT**

**BETWEEN**: South Gloucestershire Fostering Service, South Gloucestershire Council

**AND** Foster Carer/SGO (Buddy)

**ADDRESS**:

**TELEPHONE**: **E-MAIL:**

The above named carer undertakes to provide support under the buddying scheme to –

**NEW CARERS NAME:**

**NEW CARERS ADDRESS:**

**TELEPHONE: E-MAIL:**

**Requirements:**

* Support to begin part way through the assessment, prior to the fostering panel or when a child is about to be placed under temporary approval. Support to continue for a period of 1 year after approval if new carers are still fostering. If an SGO is granted in the course of this year carers can still receive support from their buddy for the remainder of the year if they wish this to continue
* Buddy to make contact prior to fostering panel or placement of child(ren), ideally this should be a face to face meeting
* Following first contact monthly telephone/face to face contact, more if required.
* Buddies to encourage new carers to attend training and other events including Launch Pad and offer to go with them if possible. Support and encourage completion of TSD standards
* Both parties need to be regularly discussing this agreement within their own supervision\* to review the effectiveness of the arrangement
* Maintain confidentiality

\**Supervision only applies to those carers who do not hold SGOs*.

**Fee subject to the above requirements being fully met:**

£100.00 per link payable as follows:

£20.00 when a link with a new carer is made

£30.00 when a new carer is approved at South Gloucestershire Fostering Panel or SGO is granted or a child is placed with new carers under temporary approval

£50 following the new carers’ first annual review/end of the year if support continued through the first year and positive feedback given

If either carer has concerns that need to be shared with the Supervising Social worker, the other party must be informed first that this will happen unless this could compromise a child or young person’s safety.

**SIGNED Fostering Buddy**: **DATE:**

**SIGNED Team Manager/Senior Social Worker: DATE:**

**Appendix 5**

**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL**

**FOSTERING SERVICE**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN BUDDY SUPPORT SCHEME**

**NAMES:**

1. **CARER**
2. **CARER**

**YEAR APPROVED TO FOSTER:**

**APPROVAL STATUS:**

**DATE OF LAST FOSTER CARER REVIEW:**

**NAME OF SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER:**

**SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES**

**REASONS FOR APPLICATION**

**Signatures and date:**

1. **Carer**
2. **Carer**