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Fostering Service

Guidance for Placement Planning Meetings

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Date: June 2020

Reviewed: October 2022

Review date: October 2024

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# Introduction

The need for good placement planning is clear and the placement planning meeting is crucial to the success of the placement for the child, the foster carers, and the birth family. It is the place:

* to share information
* to sort out who does what
* to decide on the day to day needs of the child or young person and how they will be met with the least disruption to their life
* to listen to the child or young person and to make sure they are helped to settle into a foster home
* to reassure the birth family that their child is in kind and safe hands
* to let the foster carers know the full circumstances of the child or young person which will give them clues as to why they may behave in unexpected ways
* to be clear about who has the right to make what decisions about the child or young person, and to take their views and wishes into account when discussing these things.

When a placement is well planned, everyone is united on focussing on the needs of *this* child, from *this* family, in *this* home. Everyone works together with respect and commitment understanding each other’s different roles and responsibilities. We know that poor placement planning is always a factor in disrupted placements for children and young people.

# Regulations and Roles

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review are the regulations to follow. They carry the weight of the law.

* A Placement Plan, (in South Gloucestershire this is called the “Placement Information” form on Mosaic), must be written before placement or within 5 working days of the beginning of a placement
* A Care Plan must be written before placement or within 10 working days of a placement beginning.

The child’s social worker holds responsibility for the child or young person coming into the foster home. They have to complete the forms and reports in relation to that child and make decisions for that child and family situation.

The supervising social worker knows the foster family very thoroughly, - where they have particular strengths to meet the needs of a child or young person and where their limitations may lie. They also know about all the children in the home, including the carers’ own children. It is their role to hold foster carers to account, to ensure that they meet the needs of all the children they have responsibility for. In order for a child to thrive in the foster family, the whole family dynamic needs consideration, monitoring, supervision and support.

All good practice which leads to the greatest benefit for children and young people, is based on a respectful linking of the two social workers, working together understanding each other’s distinct roles and responsibilities.

# Best Practice

1. When the “Confirmation Email” is sent out by the Placement Officer, the supervising social worker arranges and chairs a **Placement Planning Meeting**. This must be before, or within 5 working days of the placement starting.
2. The meeting would normally be in the foster carers’ home
3. The minimum attendance at this meeting is the foster carer, the child’s social worker and the supervising social worker. It is far better to include the birth family and the child as well, although heightened emotions at a stressful time in their life may not make this possible. The birth family can see the bedroom where the child will sleep and get a feel for the family he or she will be staying with. If birth parents are unable to be present, consideration should be given to the possibility of including them in the meeting via a video call. There is a leaflet for birth parents about the Fostering Service of South Gloucestershire which should be handed to them at this meeting, it can be found at the end of this guidance.

There is a template for an agenda at Appendix 1 of this guidance. All the information is shared. Sharing information about day-to-day routines is essential, the birth parent is likely to know better than anyone about their child, the foster carer will know what they can do to make sure they meet the child’s needs. It will also include health appointments, school, family time, contacts with friends and hobbies. The supervising social worker will hear what additional support has to be put in place to meet these needs alongside the needs of all the children in the family. The child’s social worker will know exactly what safeguarding requirements or Court instructions are in place

The **Placement Information** and **Care Plan** are written by the child’s social worker and, if they are completed, they are shared at the meeting.

Background information is also needed about the child or young person. Foster carers cannot safely care and make good decisions for children and young people without full information about the history of the child and family. They need to know this so that they can better understand the child’s responses and behaviours. The supervising social worker will be able during future supervision visits to mentor and coach them in responding well to a child if they are also aware of all the background information.

1. Information is gathered for the **Risk Assessment**. It is the supervising social worker’s role to write the risk assessment following the meeting with the information shared both at the meeting and on the Placement Request Form from the child’s social worker. The birth parent and the young person should be given the opportunity to feed into the risk assessment, eg; “What would you like us to do to make you feel safe if you are angry and start to feel like hitting someone?”

* What risk might this young person pose to themselves?
* What risk do others pose to this young person?
* What risk might this young person pose to others?
* What is the impact on the whole house, - the needs of each individual person living there?

1. **Delegated authority**. The document must be clear, what can the foster carers make decisions about, does this apply to both carers or just one? Does the birth parent understand the implications of this? Along with the Placement Information form, it is a living document and should be reviewed at every child in care review.

# Appendix 1

|  |
| --- |
| **Date and venue of meeting:** |
|  |
| **Name of child or children who will stay with the foster family:** |
|  |
| **Name of the birth parents:** |
|  |
| **Name of fostering family:** |
|  |
| **Name of child’s social worker:** |
|  |
| **Name of supervising social worker:** |
|  |
| **What is the plan for this child or young person?**  When will the placement plan and the care plan be available for the foster carers? Please give a date.  If the placement plan is not available, what are some of the important day-to-day routines for this child or young person and is there anything which will help them feel more at home, like a night light or a special toy? |
|  |
| **What about school arrangements?**  Name of school. Transport? Equipment needed for particular lessons? School-home diary? Uniform? Money for lunch? Friends? After school groups? |
|  |
| **What arrangements about health?**  Name of GP, Dentist, Optician.  Initial health assessment date and arrangements. Any appointments coming up?  Any allergies or food intolerances? |
|  |
| **What arrangements about family time?**  How will the child arrive and leave family time? How often? What support will foster carers give? Is there anyone the child may not see?  Are there any particular friends the child might want to see or play with? |
|  |
| **What interests and hobbies does the child or young person currently enjoy?**  How will these continue? Any special equipment, uniform or subs?  Are there any new things which the child would like an opportunity to try?  What about pocket money? What about using the internet, the phone and gaming? |
|  |
| **Any particular behaviours which may be a response to the difficulties the child has experienced which the foster carer needs to know about?**  This is not to label the child but to make sure the foster carer knows how to respond to keep the child and the whole household safe. Will observing alcohol in the foster carers’ home be a difficult trigger for this child or young person? |
|  |
| **Risk assessment**  Risks a child may experience from others  Risks a child may experience from themselves  Risks a child might pose to others  Keeping the whole fostering family safe |
|  |
| **Delegated authority**  Has the birth parent given informed consent to the Local Authority?  Is it clear exactly what the foster carers have delegated to them?  Is a signed copy available for the meeting? If not, when will this be given to the foster carers? |
|  |

**Leaflet for Birth Families of Children who are living with South Gloucestershire Foster Carers.**

If your child is living with South Gloucestershire foster carers, you might be feeling sad, or angry or worried at the moment. You probably have questions about the foster carers who will be looking after your child. This leaflet has been written by the South Gloucestershire Fostering Service to answer some of the questions you might have.



**How are foster carers chosen?**

Anyone who wants to be a foster carer must apply to the Council.

We take a lot of time checking their background, this includes with the police and their doctor.

We visit them and make sure their home is safe.

We get to know them really well; we ask them what they know about children and how they would make sure a child is well looked after, happy and safe to grow in their home.

When we have all this information, we write a report for the fostering panel and a senior manager makes the final decision about whether these people suitable to be foster carers.





**How do you make sure that foster carers always look after children well?**





Foster carers have a supervising social worker. They visit them regularly. Their job is to support carers because fostering can be hard at times. They make sure the foster carers go to training and support groups.

They also make sure the carers are always doing the very best for your child. They check their standard of care and the house; this includes an unannounced visit when the foster carers are not expecting them.







If you have any questions or worries about the foster carers, you can talk to your child’s social worker and ask them to take the matter up with the Fostering Service.

If you need to make a complaint or pass on a compliment, you can contact the South Glos feedback team on: [CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk)