

# Buckinghamshire County Council

# Process for Family Finding in Fostering September 2019

## Introduction

This document sets out the steps which should be followed when completing family finding activity to look for both short and long term fostering placements. Depending on the type of placement which the child or young person is currently in, the process which will be followed will be a little bit different. If you are unclear about any of the steps set out below or if you need any help with these processes please contact **the Fostering Team on 01296 674796**

## Process for New placements Connected Persons

Where a young person comes into care it should always be considered first whether they have a family member, friend or other person who they already know who may be able to care for them. This process is managed by **the Connected Persons fostering team who can be contacted at 01494 586460**

Where the child or young person has a permanence plan for Long Term Fostering:

* From 1st September 2018; where connected persons eperdond are presented to the Buckinghamshire County Council Fostering Panel they will be considered for both full approval and long term match. If approved then they will also be matched at this point without the need to return to panel.
* For cases that were presented prior to 1st September 2018 and a long term match was not confirmed by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), Buckinghamshire County Council will consider those to now be long term matched from the 1st September 2018.

## Process for New mainstream placements not Connected Persons

This should be used when a young person comes into care or needs a new mainstream fostering placement. This should only be used once we have reviewed options and confirmed that we are not able to find a connected person who can care for them:

1. Child’s Social Worker (CSW) must ensure all options to make a placement with connected persons are fully explored before making a referral for a fostering placement.
2. CSW to make a referral to the CYP Placements team using Subsequent Request for Placement LCS form.
3. CYP Placements team to send to the Fostering Team Mailbox the referral and copies of any other relevant information/reports.
4. If there are no in house carers available, CYP Placements team will send out referral to Independent Fostering Agencies. To do this the CYP Placements team must seek permission from a Head of Service for an external search.
5. Offers of Carers are then forwarded to the CSW and the CSW Manager. Please note that there is an expectation that costings will be considered when selecting carers. An in house match will be preferred where needs are best met.
6. In an emergency, CYP Placements will then request funding for placements from the Service Director but the CSW should still make an application to the next available resource panel
7. If it is not an emergency, CSW’S are expected to attend Resource Panel before making the placement

## Permanency planning - Child’s Journey

When a child becomes looked after planning should be started to develop a long term plan:

1. CSW to convene a Permanency Planning Meeting (PPM) no later than 2 weeks after first LAC review. (Fostering Team to be invited).
2. At the second LAC review a recommendation regarding a permanency plan for child/ren should be made.
3. PPMs should be held every 6 weeks until the Final Care Plan is agreed upon. These should be chaired by children’s team Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager if complex.

There are two instances where a Long Term Match could be required:

1. A child has a permanence plan for long term Fostering and it is proposed that the child remain long term with their current carers
2. A child has a permanence plan for long term fostering and a new placement is required to fulfil this plan

**A family finder should only be allocated where an alternative to the current placement is required.** Where a child is currently placed with Bucks foster carers, the allocated Fostering Social Worker (FSW) for those carers will normally become the family finder. If the child is placed with an IFA carer then a member of the Fostering Team will be allocated as the Family Finder.

## Process for Long Term Matching where a child has a permanence plan for long term fostering and it is proposed that the child remain long term with their current carers

**Children who have been in placement for more than two years**

For children who have been in their placement for more than two years and the plan is for them to remain, the Matching and Support Plan can be completed by the Child Social Worker (CSW) and Fostering Social Worker (FSW) and approval given by the Nominated Officer. In this case a management decision will be put on LCS. No selection meeting needs to be held in these instances.

### Children who have been in placement for less than two years

As a general rule the child should have been resident with the carers for a minimum of six months prior to long term matching.

* The decision to proceed to a long term match should be made at a LAC review and agreed by the carers, the professionals and the child’s views obtained. If it is not agreed for the placement to proceed to a long term match, a Family Finder will then need to be allocated at that point, to start looking for a new placement (see below).
* The Carers Report document should be completed by existing foster carers who are currently caring for a child and the plan is to proceed to a long term match.
* Before the visit to assess potential as long term carers takes place, the CSW should request the Form F and the latest household review from the Fostering Team/IFA. The child’s needs should be added to the Selection, Matching and Support Plan document. The agency/in house team should also be asked if there have been any concerns, complaints or allegations made about the carers and if so, ask for details of outcomes. For all long-term matches the child’s social worker should check that the carers are approved for long term and ensure that this is done prior to matching. The agency/in house team should also be asked to provide details of start and end dates and reasons why any placements with the carers have ended. A list of suggested questions (to be added to after reading foster carers’ Form F is in Appendix 1).
* The CSW and the allocated FSW for the carers should visit the carers to expressly discuss a match. This visit should provide the carers with detailed information about the child’s needs and the CSW should examine how the carers will meet need over the whole course of childhood.
* CSW and FSW to complete Selection, Matching and Support Plan. This is to be signed off by CSW manager and the decision recorded on LCS. If there was not a selection meeting at the beginning of the placement, this does not need to now take place.
* If an IFA placement is proposed, the CSW will need to attend Resource Panel for agreement to fund the placement.
* The CSW and the FSW for the carers should arrange a time to meet to prepare the panel bundle and book a panel date (see panel Front Sheet for documents required).
* The CSW’s line manager should provide quality assurance for the panel paperwork.
* The match will then need to be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation and then to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision.
* If the match is not agreed the placement remains short term and a permanency planning meeting should be convened to review options for the child

## Process for Long Term Matching where a child has a permanence plan for long term fostering and a new placement is required to fulfil this plan

Before beginning family finding, it must be clear that a placement move to a long term carer is required. The child should reside with the new carers for a minimum of six months before the decision is made to take the case to panel for a long term match. This decision should be taken at a LAC review.

* The CSW completes the Subsequent Request for Placement and referral form on LCS. This is received by the CYP Placements Team and a Family Finder will be allocated.
* If the child is placed with an in house carer then the FSW for those carers will normally become the Family Finder. If the child is placed with an IFA carer then a member of the Fostering Team will be allocated as the Family Finder.
* The allocated Family Finder should start an initial needs profile. This is a live document that should be updated as the case progresses. This document should be jointly completed by the CSW and the Family Finder.
* The Family Finder should do the following:
* Add their name as an additional worker on LCS. There should also be a management case note of the date allocated.
* Meet the child and their current carer and seek views
* Discuss the case with the IRO and meet with the CSW
* Review the case record on LCS
* Gain current photographs of the child
* Send the Children Report document to the current carers
* A photo profile of the child/ren needs to be drafted by the CSW and the Family Finding within two weeks of allocation (the template can be requested from the fostering team). The child should be included as much as possible in the creation of their profile. This profile should be sent to all potential in house carers and to the CYP Placements Team at the same time. The Line Manager for the Family Finder should have sight of this before it is sent out. When there are suitable in house carers, or carers suitable with a variation, carers in assessment or with planned vacancies, these should be prioritised. Only when none are available, should consideration be given to external foster carers.
* An LCS casenote must record the date the profiles have been sent to CYP Placements.
* The CSW and Family Finder should review progress at least every two months and update LCS to record that this has been done. The Line Manager for the Family Finder should provide monthly supervision of the progress to date and record this on LCS. All family finding minutes and profiles should be filed on livelink under 02 FORMS AND REPORTS Family Finding docs (use type FOR Family Finding) This includes the Child’s Report and also the selection, matching and support plan.
* All Family finding activity, including date of visits to carers, should be recorded on LCS so that progress can be monitored. The Family Finding Chronology should also be completed and kept up to date.
* When potential carers are identified, CSW and Family Finder will undertake a joint visit to carers.
* If more than two suitable carer households are identified, the family finder should shortlist these and send the most likely match to the CSW.
* Before the visit to potential carers takes place, the CSW should request the Form F and the latest household review from Fostering Team/IFA. The child’s needs should be added to the Selection, Matching and Support Plan document. The agency should also be asked if there have been any concerns, complaints or allegations made about the carers and if so, ask for details of outcomes. For all long-term matches the child’s social worker should check that the carers are approved for long term and ensure that this is done prior to matching. The agency should also be asked to provide details of start and end dates and reasons why any placements with the carers have ended. A list of suggested questions (to be added to after reading foster carers’ Form F are in Appendix 1)
* The CSW, the Family Finder should do a family finding visit to the proposed carers to expressly discuss a match. This visit should provide the carers with detailed information about the child’s needs and the CSW should examine how the carers will meet need over the whole course of childhood. This initial meeting will involve all registered foster carers and their FSW also needs to be present.
* A selection meeting needs to be booked as soon as possible after the home visits have taken place. This meeting should include the CSW, and their Line Manager and the Family Finder and a Manager from the Fostering Team. The meeting will be chaired by the Fostering Manager. The Selection, Matching and Support Plan document should be used and the reasons for any decision recorded. If the decision is negative the selection meeting needs to go ahead and the template needs to be completed to evidence why not.
* If an IFA placement is proposed, the CSW will need to attend Resource Panel for agreement to fund the placement.
* The Family Finder should convene a meeting to plan the transition to the new placement. This should include the CSW, the current and future carer and their social workers. The template for this meeting should be followed and a clear day by day plan produced (see Appendix 2).
* The Family Finder’s role ends when the child has been placed.
* The CSW and FSW for the carers should arrange a time to meet to prepare the panel bundle and book a Fostering panel date. (See Panel Front Sheet for Long Term Matching for what documents are required; **contact Laura Lowman – Panel Administrator on 01296 387925)**
* The Line Manager for the CSW should provide quality assurance for the panel paperwork.
* The match is then presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation and then to the Agency Decision Manager for a decision.
* If the match is not agreed, the placement remains short term and a permanency planning meeting should be convened to review options for the child.

## Appendix 1: Family Finding Questions

**About the child:**

What questions do the foster carers have after reading the child’s profile? What further information do they require?

What motivates the foster carer to come forward for this child?

**Meeting child’s needs:**

What can the carers’ offer this child in relation to child’s interests/hobbies etc.? What research have the carers completed regarding possible clubs etc. of interest to the child?

How will the carers promote the child’s identity? Culture, religion, interests?

What are the implications for the child’s care needs of their historical experiences? What might their behaviour be like? How might the carers respond to this?

What might the carers do to promote the child’s self-esteem/self-efficacy/sense of well-being?

What experiences have the carers had that might give them insight into the child’s experiences and associated feelings/behaviour? Is there someone in this family who can model positive social/relationship interactions and engagement with school/other professionals etc.?

What time do the carers have available to be with this child? Who will be available to attend social care meetings and school events/support learning etc.?

What has been the carers’ most challenging placement? How did they manage this?

**Supporting contact:**

What have the carers done previously to support a child’s contact with their birth family/previous carers? How will they support this child?

**Family membership:**

How will the carers support the child to feel included in their family?

Do the carers have any birth children/other placements? How do they feel about another child joining the family?

Support network including agency and local professionals:

What support network do the carers have? How supportive/accepting/understanding are they of the carers’ responsibilities?

What do the carers/agency think are the likely support needs of the placement? What support does the agency offer carers/child to be placed? What support is available in the local area? CAMHS? Schools?

Any queries from Form F/info about number/length of placements/allegations?

Specific questions for carers about this child’s needs? E.g. health, education, behaviour, contact

**Existing commitments**

Do the carers have any commitment to caring for other children e.g. grandchildren who stay overnight or child minding during the day?

Have the carers got any planned holidays?

## Appendix 2: Transitions Plan For Long Term Fostering

1. Meeting between two sets of carers and social workers involved to set up transition plan and expectations during transitions. This will also allow for information sharing about the child, including child's history and routines, and is the starting point for a working relationship between carers. This process could take between 1 week and 4 weeks depending on the child's needs, age, understanding etc. Generally the older the child, the longer the transition period. A rushed transition to a new placement can impact the new relationship in the short and longer term. If the child needs to change school, then both schools need to be incorporated into the plan.
2. Preparation for the child moving placement to consider issues of loss, identity, attachment, relationships and claiming/safety. This placement change could trigger memories or feelings in relation to past separations , moves and new carers, and can cause the child to cat in strange or unpredictable ways perhaps due to the child's "trauma organised brain". These behaviours should be understood in relation to child's history and their neurobiological development. These life experiences must be acknowledged in relation to the child's expectations of the foster carers home and their future life together.
3. Child to have information about the new carers' shared with them by social worker and current foster carers. Any thoughts and questions by child noted. Consideration of the child's feelings in relation to fear, mistrust, sadness, apprehension and abandonment by current carer. The transition process is designed to make these feelings manageable for the child, rather than a further traumatic life change and to transfer "the source of safety and security from the foster carer". The child's feelings will impact upon the child's behaviour and presentation to everyone involved. The foster carers should expect to talk about every step to the child, to acknowledge the process and their feelings and provide information about what will be happening next. Depending on the child's age creating a planner or calendar for the transition period.
4. First visit, an hour long at current foster carers' home. Child's thoughts and questions to be shared with new carers, with the support of the sw and current carers.
5. Further visits by new carers to child in current placement to include calm, low­ key and interactive activities . Such as reading books, jigsaw puzzles, art and craft, going for a walk. Carers could also attend and observe child in an activity/group important to the young person and eat together. Trying to maintain the child's usual routine as much as possible.
6. Gaps between visits allow the child and carers time to process the experience in terms of relationship changes and associated feelings.
7. Visits to move to new foster carers' home and continue to be low-key etc. Allow exploration of new home and meeting all family members and pets etc living in household. Also to include visit to new school if school change required. Exploration of hobbies/interests/groups/clubs etc of interest to child in the area. Time spent with carers to be built up and to include eating together and gradually taking over caring responsibilities and leading to overnight stay. New foster carers to allow space for the child's mourning for their previous carers. This will demonstrate their empathy and willingness to care for the child.
8. Skype communication to be undertaken as and when during transition process.
9. Goodbye visit between child and current carers. Showing emotion is to be expected and allowed (adults to be in control) but a plan to manage this in place. Sensitive moving of the child's belongings is required on moving day.
10. Post-placement contact between child and previous carers to be arranged during transition period. Termination of this relationship may be experienced by the child as abandonment.

**Child in Care Post Placement Schedule**

* Day 1:

Child placed with long term carers

* Within first 2 weeks of placing:

Indirect Contact with Foster Carers (telephone, Skype, card, letter)

* After 2 weeks and within 4 weeks of placing: Direct Contact with Foster Carers (Pop-round)
* Within 28 days of placing:

1st Child in Care Review

* 4-8 weeks after Pop-round Contact:

Direct Contact with Foster Carers (Assimilation)

* Within 3 months of 1st Review:

2nd Child in Care Review

* 3-4 months after Assimilation Contact:

3rd Direct Contact with Foster Carers (Affirmation)

* Within 6 months of 2nd Review:

3rd Child in Care Review

Research basis for document:

Beyond the Adoption Order - Selwyn et al 2014

Coram BAAF Practice Note 64 - Best practice in meetings between prospective adopters and children prior to matching

Family Futures Practice Paper Series - Planning Transitions for Children moving to Permanent Placement (2009)

Fostering Devon document

Undertaking planned transitions for children in out-of-home care - Browning in Adoption and Fostering (2015)

Transitions planning calendar

To include introductions, visits, meetings etc, and times, locations and who to attend.

**Week 1**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
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**Week 2**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
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