



Child and Parent Placements

This is an overarching policy aimed for all sectors responding to child and parent placements with general underpinning requirements identifying placement by 'type'. This document needs to be read alongside the following:

- Placement with Parents (predominantly this document focuses on children subject to a care order placed with parents)

1. Introduction

This guidance should be implemented following:

- A Child and Family assessment/ A pre-birth assessment; or
- Pre -proceedings
- At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings.

Placements should not be requested without an assessment. Without a robust risk assessment, it is difficult to achieve and enable good matching and may lead to drift and highly complex dynamics for the carers to manage, particularly in their own homes and also ending in a high number of unsuccessful placements.

2. Assessment and checks before placement:

- Obtaining relevant information about the proposed main carer or carers and all members of the household; an example of this is that they will provide proof and evidence of their identity, age and immigration status;
- Inspecting the accommodation in all areas;
- Checking the proposed carer and all members of the household aged 18 and over with:
 - The Police (Public Protection Unit); or
 - The parents and adult members of the household by them applying for a basic [DBS check](#).
- The carer's GP, NSPCC and the internal social care information system records in case there is any additional information on the family, especially with respect to Adults Services.

The assessment should take account of:

- The parents' capacity, and the capacity of other adult members of the household, to care for children. Where a child has suffered, or was likely to suffer, significant harm the assessment should address 'what has changed in parental capacity and circumstances that indicate this placement will be in the child's best interest and will promote safe care?' in particular in relation to the child:
 - To provide for the child's overall wellbeing, especially their emotional, physical, and behavioural needs;
 - To protect the child, including taking appropriate measures to prevent them being exposed to others that could compromise their safety;

- To ensure that the home environment is suitable and safe for the child including, where relevant, the need for a risk assessment of any pets and the environment in which they are kept;
- To ensure that the child's emotional needs are met, and he/she is provided with a positive sense of self, including any particular needs arising from religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background, and any disability the child has;
- To promote the child's opportunities to learn and encourage intellectual development through encouragement, cognitive stimulation and the promotion of educational success and social opportunities;
- To enable the child to regulate his/her emotions and behaviour, including by modelling appropriate behaviour and interactions with others;
- To provide a stable family environment to enable the child to develop and maintain secure attachments to the parents and other persons who provide care for the child;
- Parents' previous and current state of health (physical, emotional and mental health), the parents' current or past issues with regard to domestic violence, substance misuse;
- The state of health (physical, emotional and mental health) of other adult members within the household and their medical history, including any current or past issues of domestic violence, substance misuse;
- The relationships and functioning in the family and the composition of the parents' household, including:
 - The identity of all other members of the household, their age and the nature of their relationship with parents and one another, including any sexual relationship;
 - Their relationship with any parent of the child;
 - Other adults who are not members of the household but are likely to have regular and ongoing contact with the child;
 - If there are any current/previous domestic violence and abuse between household members including the parents.

The parents' family history, including:

- The parents' childhood experiences and upbringing, including their strengths and any difficulties of their parents/carers;
- Particular attention on addressing any cultural narratives and issues that form part of the family history; an example of this is Female Genital Mutilation;
- The parents' relationship with their own parents and siblings, and their relationships with each other;
- The parents' educational achievement, including any specific learning difficulty/physical disability;
- A Chronology of significant life events;
- Clarification of any other key relatives and their relationships with the child and parents;
- Disclosure of any criminal offences of which the parents or other members of the household have been convicted or cautioned;
- Parents' past and present employment/sources of income;
- The geographical neighbourhood and resources available in the community to support the child and parents;
- Any available information about the parents' previous experiences of looking after children. Where a parent has other children subject to care/adoption orders, earlier case records should be explored to ascertain the circumstances, which led to social work involvement and any indication that the capacity of the parent to bring up children has changed.

3. Recommending the Plan

In normal circumstances, the child's placement with his or her parent must form part of the Care Plan, upon the recommendation of a Looked After Review. If the child has previously suffered Significant Harm when living with the parent, the Looked After Review should actively consider the recommending a Child Protection Conference to safeguarding the child when at home.

The recommendations of the Looked After Review or Child Protection Review Conference will then be sent to the Service lead, together with the Care Plan and proposed Placement Plan and a written report covering the following:

- A summary of child's and family's history;
- A summary of how and why the child came to be in care;
- A summary of plan for the child when he/she originally came into care;
- Details of proposed placement with the parent/s including:
 - Any therapeutic input that may be required to assist the child and/or parents to acknowledge the reasons for the child being placed in care, to ensure there is no minimisation of previous actions and to assist in the process of coming to terms with any trauma that may previously have occurred.
- The outcome of the assessments, consultations and enquiries made, including an assessment of the parents' ability to meet the identified needs of the child;
- The aims and objectives of the proposed placement (there needs to be great clarity about why this placement is being proposed) and long-term plan for the child;
- Any identified areas of risk involved in the placement;
- The support and services to be provided to the family and child;
- Details of supervision of placement;
- Arrangements for the child's education;
- Contingency plans in case of breakdown.

As well as the usual contents, the proposed Placement Plan must include the following:

1. Details of the support and services to be provided to the parents during the placement;
2. The obligation on the parents to notify the Local Authority of any relevant change in circumstances including any intention to change address, any changes in the household in which the child lives and any serious incident involving the child;
3. The obligation on the parents to ensure that any information relating to the child or the child's family or any other person given in confidence to the parents in connection with the placement is kept confidential and that such information is not disclosed to any person without the consent of the Local Authority;
4. The circumstances in which it is necessary to obtain the prior approval of the Local Authority for the child to live in a household other than that of the parents;
5. The circumstances in which the placement of the child with the parents pending completion of the assessment of suitability will be terminated if the decision following completion of the assessment is not to confirm the placement.

N.B. The Local Authority must provide such services and support to the parents as appear to be necessary to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and record details in the Care Plan and Placement Plan.

4. Approval of the placement

The placement can only be made after the approval of the Assistant Director in consultation with the Service lead/Manager as they will have given their views and the Placement Plan will be prepared, except as set out in 'Immediate Placements'.

The Service lead must be satisfied that:

- The child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration or articulated based on the needs of an unborn/ newly born child;
- The assessment of parents' suitability to care for the child
- The placement will safeguard and promote the child's welfare;
- The Independent Reviewing Officer has been consulted.

If approval is given, consideration should be given to whether the Care Order is still required. The Local Authority and parents may agree to apply to discharge the Care Order and if so, such an agreement must include the level of support and supervision to be provided by the Local Authority after the Care Order has been discharged, and the level of co-operation by the parents.

5. Short Term Placements

Where the relevant plan provides for a series of short-term placements of a child with a parent, the requirements as to consultation, enquiries and checks can be carried out once only rather than every time a placement is made, provided that:

- All the placements take place within a twelve months period;
- No single placement is for a period of more than four weeks; and
- The total duration of the placements does not exceed 90 days.

If a series of short-term placements is part of a longer-term rehabilitation plan, further consultation and approval must be obtained before the rehabilitation plan is extended and/or the child is returned to the parent's full-time care.

6. Immediate Placements

The Assistant Director can approve an immediate placement without the necessary consultation and checks having been made provided that:

- a. There are exceptional circumstances which justify an immediate placement;
- b. There has been an interview with the proposed carer who agrees to the placement and provides as much of the assessment information as can be readily ascertained at the interview;
- c. The accommodation has been inspected; and
- d. Information has been obtained about and the social worker seeks to meet the other people in the household within 72 hours of the child being placed and when the placement arrangement meeting should be held (This is particularly relevant to identifying issues such as domestic violence and substance misuse which may impact on the child's safety);
- e. The assessment and the review of the child's case are completed within 10 working days of the child being placed;
- f. The decision on placement is made and approved within 10 working days of the assessment being completed and:
 - If the decision is to confirm the placement, the placement plan is reviewed (and if appropriate amended);
 - If the decision is not confirm the placement, the placement is terminated.

The reasons for a decision to place a child on this basis must be fully recorded, signed by the Assistant Director and placed on the child's case record on the social care information system.

If the child is placed in these circumstances, social work visits must take place at least once a week until the first Looked After Review, and thereafter at intervals of not more than 6 weeks. The Looked After Review must be held within the first month of the placement being made.

7. Notifications of placements

The allocated social worker will update the child's record on the social care information system with the details of the placement in their absence this should be completed by a Duty Social Worker.

Notification of the placement will be sent by the child's social worker to the Designated Nurse for CLA, the relevant person in the education service and Virtual School, the local Children's Services (if the placement is in the area of a different local authority) and the child's GP.

The allocated social worker will notify all family members consulted and involved in the decision-making process of the placement, as well as all those involved in the day to day arrangements for the child, including school and any health professional or YOS/YJS Officer, if they are actively involved placement the child or young person.

The allocated social worker must also notify the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer.

These notifications must be made in writing, advising of the placement decision and the name and address of the children's home where the child is to be placed. The notifications should be before the start of the placement or within 5 working days.

8. Pre - placement meetings

The placement arrangement meeting, and the placement arrangement form are essential tasks to be completed prior to any placement. Failure to do so could result in delay in making a placement, or a poor placement outcome. A pre-birth assessment is expected in all cases, except where the pregnancy has been concealed or only identified at a late stage. In these cases, where a placement is required in an emergency, an assessment should be completed as soon as is practicable.

A placement should be agreed for a maximum of 28 days and reviewed formally. Any decision making regarding extending the placement should be made based on ongoing assessments and monitoring of the placement. The placement should continue to be reviewed within the statutory review process. The Fostering Service recognises the duty to foster carers and parents to ensure that the best help and support is provided from the outset, establishing a clear agreement clarifies roles and responsibilities to the placement for all parties involved.

All placements will have an assessment component. The prime aim of any placement should be to assess the safe parenting capacity of the parent. Where the parent is also a 'Child Looked After', realistic timescales for independent living should form part of the assessment and planning.

However, parent and child foster care placements should not be treated as the only means of assessment or training in parenting skills. The foster carer will be informing the assessment, which is the responsibility of the child's social worker. The parenting assessment will support and work alongside the foster placement.

For a Parent and Child placement to successfully meet its objectives there must be multi-agency working and assessment. The child's social workers will need to take the lead in negotiating with other agencies to ensure that every placement is fully supported (e.g. adult social care, mental health, learning disability, health visiting, family centre and midwife etc).

Where the child is in placement and subject to either an **ICO** or a **Care Order**, **Parental Responsibility** is shared, and the local authority will need to negotiate with the parent (s) the most appropriate arrangements for exercising their respective parental responsibilities. These arrangements must be discussed, agreed and recorded at the placement arrangement meeting.

At the placement arrangement meeting, a clear statement as to the objectives of the placement and the timescale for assessment must be provided by the social worker. Those involved in the meeting must agree how progress towards meeting the objectives will be tracked, and how success will be measured. This must be made clear to the parent.

Where the parent is also 'Looked After' various scenarios could apply. If the parenting assessment concludes that the parent is able to safely parent the child then the aims and timescales of the placement must be re-negotiated to include clear criteria for moving on into independent living, or to another form of supported arrangement not involving fostering. Should, however, the parent be assessed as unable to safely parent, then by the direction of the Court, or with the agreement of the parent, the child should be moved to a different placement. This may also involve a change of placement for the parent if the placement is designated only as a parent and child placement.

If the parent and child placement is subject to Care Proceedings the child's social worker must complete relevant tasks that relate to Placement with Parents procedures.

9.Social Work Visits During the Placement

The allocated social worker must visit the child in the placement within one week of the placement and thereafter every four weeks - see Social Work Visits to Looked After Children Guidance.

If the child is placed with parents pending assessment, social work visits must take place at least once a week until the first Looked After Review, thereafter at intervals of not more than four weeks.

10. Ending of placement

Wherever possible the decision to end a placement should be made at a Looked After Review and the ending should take place in a planned way. ***In Re DE (A Child) [2014], the High Court stated that not less than fourteen days' notice of a removal of the child should be given to the parents, save in an emergency.***

The Court further stated that any removal of a child in circumstances where the child's welfare does not require immediate removal, or without proper consideration and consultation, is likely to be an unlawful interference with the rights of the parent and child under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In emergencies, the social worker must discuss the case with his/her manager, who will make the decision. Legal advice should always be sought. The Care Order gives the local authority power to enable the child to be removed by the social worker, but this power should only be used after obtaining legal advice; the use of other orders (e.g. a Recovery Order) might be appropriate in some circumstances.

All those notified of the placement starting should be notified, in writing, when it ends; preferably notifications should be made prior to the ending, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

A letter should also be sent to the parents and child explaining why the decision was made.

11. The sections below set out the different scenarios whereby arrangements may be made for a parent (or parents) and their child (or children) for the purposes of an assessment:

a) A voluntary arrangement by the local authority where the child is not looked after

Where a local authority wishes to assess a parent's parenting capacity in the context of support provided to the child/family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or pre care proceedings, this would need to be with the agreement of the parent. The local authority may decide to arrange with the family to live with a local authority foster carer to make the assessment, rather than to make use of a residential family centre.

Since in this case the child is not looked after by the local authority, none of the provisions of the Children Act 1989 relating to Children Looked After will apply, and the foster carer will not be acting in their capacity as a foster carer under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. In such a case the local authority will need to be satisfied that the arrangement is appropriate, in the sense that the foster carers have the necessary skills to participate in the assessment, and will not place at risk the welfare of any foster child who is placed in the household.

b) A voluntary placement by the local authority where the child is looked after

In a situation where the child is looked after and the parents are 18 or older, the provisions relating to Children Looked After will apply in relation to the child only. The child will be placed with the foster carer under Section 22 of the Children Act 1989, and the responsible authority will be under a duty to make the most appropriate placement available for both the parent and child. In making the placement it will therefore need to consider the skills and capacity of the foster carer, notwithstanding that the assessment of the parent's ability is not covered by the 2011 Regulations.

Although the child will be fostered by the foster carer, the child's parent or parents will also be living with the child in the foster carer's household. As the parent will not be a Child Looked After, the provisions in respect of Children Looked After will not apply to them, regardless of whether the parent is under 18 or is older or has previously been a Child Looked After.

In these circumstances the parent will still hold parental responsibility in respect of their child and be living in the same household as the child's foster carer. It will therefore be vital that respective roles and arrangements for delegated authority are clarified when the arrangements are being made. These must be set out in the placement plan and discussed and noted as part of the placement arrangement meeting. The foster carer's task in relation to undertaking an assessment of the parent's capabilities will not be governed by the 2011 Regulations but will be closely aligned with their responsibilities towards the Child Looked After.

The fostering service and the responsible authority will need to satisfy themselves that the proposed arrangements will not impact unduly on the foster carer's responsibilities towards other children. Any necessary support should be provided to enable the arrangements to succeed. As with any placement when another child is already placed with the foster carer, the responsible authority for that child would need to agree to the new arrangements.

For the purposes of the 2011 Regulations, a parent living with a foster carer in the above circumstances is a member of the foster carer's household. The fostering service's safeguarding policy must include

a statement of measures to be taken to safeguard children placed with foster carers before any arrangements are made for a parent and child to join the household. The 2011 Regulations allow for DBS checks to be obtained but there is no requirement for these to be undertaken as a prerequisite to the individual joining the household (regulation 26 and 28(3)).

c) Parent Looked After, Child Not Looked After

During Care Proceedings it could be that a child of a Looked After parent under the age of 18 is placed with them, in a foster placement, under the:

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Placement of child in care with parent). The requirement of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations will apply to both parent and child, but the 2011 Fostering Regulations will apply only to the parent.

d) A voluntary placement by the local authority where both the child and parent are looked after

Where the parent is under 18 and is looked after by the local authority and the child is also looked after by the local authority, each will be subject to all the requirements of the:

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

Where both the child and the parent are looked after the provisions relating to Children Looked After will apply to both. The duties in relation to Section 22 of the 1989 Act will apply in respect of the placements of both the child and the parent.

e) An arrangement directed by the courts where the child is looked after

In this situation the parent could be either under or over the age of 18, and only the child will be subject to all the requirements of the 2010 Care Planning and 2011 Fostering Regulations. The regulations in relation to placement with parents will not apply, and the parent will be considered as part of the fostering household. In this situation the parent, if under 18, will have been assessed but not identified as a child in need in their own right. Where care proceedings are in progress, the court may require an assessment of the child and their parents. If the child is subject to an interim care order under Section 38(6) and the court directs a parenting assessment but leaves it up to the local authority how that assessment is organised, the local authority may decide that the parent and child will live with a foster carer for the purpose. This will be a placement of a Child Looked After by the local authority and so the placement will be governed by the 2011 Regulations.

Even if the court directs that an assessment be made by a foster carer, the placement will still be a local authority placement and the 2011 Regulations will apply.

The usual fostering limit - The usual fostering limit applies to the placement of Children Looked After, and so a parent who is living in a parent and child arrangement with a foster carer does not count towards that limit unless they are also a Child Looked After. However, the impact of the parent being within the household must be taken into account in considering the placement of any Child Looked After.

f) Parent and child foster placements

Parent and child carers offer a very specialised form of fostering. They have a role as a teacher of parenting skills whilst also contributing to the assessment process which will determine the care plan for the baby in placement. There is an expectation that carers will endeavour to educate, advise and

support parents in placement and also model appropriate parenting behaviour. At all times the welfare of the baby/child in placement is the paramount consideration and the foster carer has to have that as their primary focus. The foster carer should be working to assist the parent to develop a secure and loving, healthy attachment relationship with their baby. The key attachment figure for the baby should be their parent and the parent's capacity to provide this healthy environment for their child's future wellbeing and good emotional health will form a key part of the assessment.

A parent and child foster placement is also a family home and the expectations of the placement have to fit with the reality of family life for the carers. It is also acknowledged that whilst the fostering task is a challenging one for the carer the expectations of the parents are also considerable. The stakes are very high for the parent and a parent and baby foster placement may be the key opportunity for the parent with the support of the carer to develop the skills and capacity to care for their baby in the community. The timescales for such work have to be determined by the child /rens need for timely resolution of permanence plans which would enable them to either be safely cared for by birth parents in the community, placed permanently within the wider family network or placed with adoptive parents. A parent is expected to live within a family home and care for their child with the support and advice of the foster carer. Often it can be difficult for parents managing to live with another family home environment and taking account of the expectations of them to focus on the care for their child within this setting which may include the children of the foster carers or in some situations other young people in placement..

The foster carer will provide a supportive home environment for the parent and the child in placement and will endeavour to work in a clear, open and honest way with the parent focusing on the strengths the parent has and the progress made but also highlighting any area where there are still concerns or where additional support is needed. Foster carers will keep regular records of the progress in placement which will be shared with the parent and the carer will contribute to the overall assessment in this way. It is important to emphasise however that the social worker for the child is co-ordinating the assessment work and care planning and has the key responsibility to ensure there is no drift in the planning for the child and that the expectations of the parent in placement and the role of the carer is kept under frequent review. There should be very close liaison between the social worker for the child and the social worker for the carer. Supervising social workers for parent and child carers are expected to provide a high level of support in acknowledgement of the challenging nature of this fostering task; and have a fundamental role with the placement arrangement meeting, monitoring the progress of the placement and with the regular parent and child placement reviews.

Parent and child placements do carry unique risks due to the vulnerability of the often very young children being placed, and the necessity of having an adult in a carers' home undertaking parenting tasks. Prior to the onset of any such placement a Placement Referral and Risk Assessment form will need to be completed to try and identify and thus reduce and manage such risks by the placing social worker. This risk assessment form is integral to the specific referral form for parent and child placements.

It is not appropriate for a foster placement for a parent and their child to be considered if the parent has significant mental health difficulties which impacts on their capacity to care for the child and requires a very high level of supervision from the carer. Foster carers are not able to guarantee 24-hour supervision even in placements where there are no other children within the family home. There may be an agreement that for example the child is cared for at night by the carer for a short period of time at the outset of the placement. However, the parent does need to be able to be in a position to take on responsibility for night-time care of the child or the placement will not be able to progress. If there are significant concerns about the level of supervision that is needed, then a baby monitor at night cannot be seen as a source of providing that supervision.

Likewise, it would not be appropriate to consider a care plan for a parent and child foster placement if the parent has substance misuse issues and this is not managed through a sustained programme of support through substance misuse services. Babies who are born withdrawing need a very high level of specialist care and it is not reasonable to expect a parent to provide that level of care to a very unsettled baby if they also need to manage their own substance misuse issues. If a parent does go through a period of detoxification in a specialist unit there would have to be clear evidence of sustained abstinence in the community before a parent and baby care plan could be considered and the timescales for the baby in achieving permanence do have to be at the forefront of the planning.

This assessment will need to outline any concerns about potential violence in the parent's network, any anti-social behavioural concerns, any risks to self or known mental health concerns and any known substance misuse issues. Clear guidelines about how such risks should be managed by the foster carer and the implications for their family or others in placement as appropriate will need to be developed. Risks related to the disclosure of the address of the placement by the parent to for example a known violent ex-partner will have to be fully considered prior to placement. It can be very difficult for such information to be kept confidential if the parent is put under considerable pressure by someone in their network. The local authority has a clear duty of care to foster carers and their families and this information needs to be fully considered to inform the care planning. If the potential risks of such disclosure are too great, then it is not appropriate to continue with a care plan for a parent and child foster placement. Issues that have been identified as part of the risk assessment need to be shared and fully considered at the initial pre placement meeting.

It is good practice for the parent to have the opportunity to visit the placement and meet the carers prior to moving in. In such situations when the placement is taking place in a planned way the placement arrangement meeting should take place prior to placement. The foster carer should be provided with the referral form and background information prior to placement. The supervising social worker for the carer will also arrange to complete a safe caring agreement with the carer which will be shared with the parent.

The placement arrangement meeting is a key meeting which has to be chaired by a Manager and if it does not occur before placement should take place within 5 working days of the placement. The set-up meeting has to include the parent, carer, social worker for the child and social worker for the carer and can also include the Guardian and respective legal representatives as appropriate. There is a placement arrangement meeting template which should be used for all placements and this covers in detail the expectations of parents and the carers. It is also important that there is a robust discussion on the anticipated length of the placement, and what the potential exit plans are and any contingency to such plans to ensure that there is no drift in the permanence planning for the child. It is an expectation that most placement should not continue for more than 12 weeks with the assessment moving back into the community if good progress is being made. It will be made clear at the set-up meeting what the consequences will be if the parent leaves the placement in an unplanned way. There will be a clear expectation that the child will be moved to either a baby only foster carer or an appropriate concurrency carer if the parent moves out of the placement or the placement needs to be brought to a close because of concerns about the safety of the baby being compromised by residing with his or her parent.

At the set-up meeting there will be discussion about the expectations of the carer in terms of recording and carers are provided with a Recording Template. Separate scaling questions can be used as required to record progress and the recording requirements need to be kept under frequent review between the social worker for the carer and the social worker for the child. Records will be shared regularly by the carer with the parent and the parent will have the opportunity to make comment.

These records should then be sent to the social worker for the child and social worker for the carer and can be made available in court as part of an reports within the care proceedings.

The social worker for the carer and the social worker for the child needs to set up regular review meetings which are outside the CLA review meeting schedule. It will be appropriate for the Team Manager or Practice Manager to chair such meetings as required to ensure there is progress in the permanence planning for the baby and that the placement remains focused. If the plan progresses to rehabilitation a meeting will need to be convened to plan the detail of the rehabilitation plan including the additional support and supervision that might be needed and the future role of the foster carer

There is separate guidance within West Sussex on Family and Friends care and that guidance should be referred to if such a care plan is being considered.

g) Residential assessments may take place in residential family centres.

A local authority sometimes wishes to commission an assessment of a parent's ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, to inform its decision making about the provision of support services or intervention through care proceedings. Sometimes the court will request such an assessment within the framework of care proceedings. Most commonly these are arrangements for mothers and their babies.

A Residential family centre is an establishment where:

- Accommodation is provided for a child and their parents;
- The parents' capacity to respond to the child's needs and safeguard their welfare is monitored and assessed; and
- Parents are given such advice, guidance or counselling as is considered necessary.
- An increasingly common alternative to assessment in a residential family centre is the arrangement whereby children and their parents live with foster carers for the purposes of assessment. A foster carer's household is not an establishment, and so cannot be regarded as a residential family centre.

The supervising social worker, social worker, foster carer and parent should all receive copies of the contract.

11. Criteria for Child and Parent Assessment Placement: Foster Carers

These criteria are in addition to the eligibility criteria the Fostering Policy and apply specifically to Child/ Parent foster carers:

- Carers must be able to demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and values outlined in the Fostering CoramBAAF assessment and that they adequately meet all other PFS Level 4 fostering requirements;
- There are additional competencies and specific to child and parent fostering, which approved foster carers will need to evidence that they can meet;
- Carers need to have sufficient physical space to accommodate a parent with their child on a residential or non-residential (subject to approval) basis;
- They also need to have the availability to undertake intense pieces of assessment work. Residential assessments are a constant process with the child and their parent being in the

foster home for the majority of the time. This will have implications for all members of the fostering household, and also for extended family members;

- For child and parent carers, their home is their workplace and they need to be available to focus on the fostering task. It would not generally be appropriate to approve carers for this type of fostering who have young dependent children (under the age of 10 years);
- In exceptional circumstances, where carers with young children are in a partnership and both are available as full-time scheme carers, then it may be possible to undertake one parent and child assessment, subject to satisfactory assessment and ongoing review;
- Carers can be approved for one child and parent placement and respite/holiday cover;
- In the unlikely event of a carer not having a child and parent in placement, it may be possible for them to undertake other time limited pieces of fostering work, e.g. babies born substance dependent, mentoring and training, subject to negotiation and agreement with the PCW;
- Child and parent fostering households must be non-smoking in accordance with CoramBAAF guidance.

Additional Assessment Criteria for Child and Parent Assessment: Foster Carers

Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people / understand your role as a foster carer / understand the development of children and young people

An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy, emotional, physical and sexual development as well as their health and educational achievement:

- What do carers understand about the term "Good enough parenting" and how do they link this with their own experiences and standards?
- How will carers manage the needs of child and parent when they are both children?
- Are they able to ensure that the child remains the paramount concern at all times?
- Do carers have a good understanding of available support systems e.g. Teenage Pregnancy Midwife, Include, Children's Centres etc?
- Where do they see these agencies/services fitting into the assessment process and meeting ongoing support needs of the family?
- If a placement is residential, how will the carer encourage the parent to take full care of child?
- Would carers have the ability to intervene if it was felt that the parent was offering inappropriate/risky care?
- An ability to work closely the child's family, and others who are important to the child:
- How would carers provide an environment conducive to a good assessment?
- How does the carer see their role in term of working with the "other" parent/extended family?
- Does the carer have the ability to assess the impact external factors have on the parents ability to care for and protect their child?
- How would the carer build in time and use reflection/feedback with the parent?
- An ability to set appropriate boundaries, and manage children's behaviour within these without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment:
- How will the carer set down clear boundaries with the parent? Is the carer clear about boundaries within the home that are non-negotiable and negotiable? Do they value the use of the planning meeting and written agreements and are they able to work to these?
- Is the carer able to recognise how their own behaviour/standards/values may impact on the assessment?
- Can the carer demonstrate an understanding of the reasons underlying various behaviours and be open to exploring different perspectives?

- What is the carers attitude to different behaviours and the modification techniques that can be used in different situations?
- What does the carer understand by role modelling and what will this mean for all members of the family when undertaking this type of task?
- Is the carer committed to finding creative and innovative ways of assessing? Are they able use a range of tools and assess which ones would be useful to address certain issues?
- A knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding:
- In terms of assessing parents it may be that you are working with a parent who is a “child” – how would you assess their level of development whilst conducting an assessment of their parenting?
- Will the carer be able to break down the task of parenting and communicate this to the parent?
- Does the carer have a range of communication skills?
- Does the carer have an ability to seek out other agencies for advice/support carer and/or parent \around issues of child development?

Understand health and safety, and health care / keep children and young people safe from harm

An ability to ensure that the children/young people are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm and abuse:

- Does the carer understand what is necessary to provide a safe environment for the assessment to take place?
- Does the carer have an awareness of the legislation, policies and guidelines that underpin practice in the childcare arena?
- What does the carer identify as safeguarding issues for these types of placements? Are they able to integrate these into a Safe Care Plan?
- How will the carer assess, encourage and enable the parent to take responsibility for their own and their child’s health and safety?
- An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened:
- Be aware of the skills and knowledge parents need to keep themselves and their children safe from harm and abuse and can assess risk;
- Help parents develop skills through experience, discussion and observation of carer as a role model;
- Encourage parents to reflect on how they can identify safe and unsafe situations and engage protective strategies;
- Help parents identify their own support networks which they can access when necessary;
- How will the carer work with the parent regarding self-protection skills?

Know how to communicate effectively

- An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the departments planning for the child/young person:
- Does the carer have a commitment to child centred practice?
- How will carer manage and prioritise the needs of two “children” whilst keeping the baby’s needs paramount?

- Does the carer understand the importance of planning, exploring and using a range of interventions and being able to evaluate these?
- Is the carer able to support the parent in contributing to their child's plans?
- Are they able to advocate on behalf of the child and/or the parent when necessary?
- An ability to communicate effectively:
- Is the carer able to communicate and articulate the findings of their assessments to parents and members of the team involved?
- Is the carer able to communicate their findings in a report that is clear, well balanced and analytical?
- Can the carer use a range of communication skills to engage the parent in a good working relationship?
- Does the carer have good negotiation skills?
- How does the carer feel they will be able to manage if interpreting facilities are needed during the assessment?
- An ability to keep information confidential:
- An ability to use information appropriately
- Able to provide information on a need to know basis?
- Have an understanding and commitment to maintaining confidentiality?
- Is the carer able to provide space for the parents to store information safely and securely?
- An ability to promote equality, diversity and value the rights of individuals and groups within society:
- What is the carers understanding of the discrimination faced by some of the parents they may be working with i.e. teenage parents, parents with drug and alcohol issues, parents with a learning difficulty etc?
- What is the carers understanding of how cultural and racial issues influence parenting?
- Is the carer able to critically evaluate their own attitudes and values and how they will impact on their role as a parent and child assessment carers?
- Does the carer have a commitment to the concept that all individuals have rights?
- Does the carer understand, promote and celebrate difference?
- Does the carer accept that all parents and children should be guaranteed the same quality of service?
- Is the carer able to challenge racism, discrimination and inequality?

Develop yourself

An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families and the impact fostering is likely to have on them all:

- What is their experience of being parented/parenting?
- Is the carer able to explore other attitudes towards and understanding of other methods/styles of parenting?
- Do all family members understand what is involved in being parent/child assessment foster carers?
- Can they recognise their own limits?
- An ability to have people and links within the community which provide support:
- Is the carer able to seek out support?
- Does that carer have a commitment to a multi-agency approach to working with families?
- Is the carer able to make links with services in the community?

- Is the carer committed to attending monthly support groups?
- An ability to use training opportunities and to improve skills:
- Does the carer value training?
- Is the carer able to identify own training needs?
- Is the carer committed to attending training?
- Is the carer open to other forms of training i.e. shadowing, observing etc?
- An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress:
- Is the carer able to identify when the placement is in crisis and be open and honest with the team involved?
- How will the carer retain a positive working relationship with the parent through periods of stress?
- Does the carer have strategies to employ when experiencing stressful episodes e.g. recognising a need for time out either for parent or self?
- Is the carer able to identify their own and their family's support needs?

4. Criteria for Acceptance of Referrals for Placement

Social Workers will be required to submit the initial placement request and Child and Parent Assessment Placement Referral Form. It is essential that a Risk Assessment is also completed.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks must be undertaken in respect of all parents 16+yrs, before a placement can be made.

Other additional assessments previously undertaken with regards to the parent should be sent with the referral. This also includes an up to date chronology if available.

It is essential that any safeguarding issues are highlighted within the referral e.g. non accidental injuries, mental health issues, drug and alcohol use and an analysis on possible impact on a fostering family be made to assist with matching.

5. Allowances and Fee Payments – *The Fostering Service in West Sussex have a very specific breakdown regarding the fees, household fee, all-inclusive allowance etc for parent and child foster placements.*

Weekly maintenance allowance in Child and Parent Assessment placements

Maintenance allowance is paid to the foster carer for the child at current rates. In some cases, a parent may already be claiming child benefit for their child prior to reception into care. Where this is the case the parent must notify Child Benefit Centre immediately. There is usually 12 weeks turn around for the benefit to be stopped, the decision to stop the child benefit will be made by that agency. If the parent is in receipt of Child Benefit, then this amount is deducted from the foster carers maintenance allowance for the child. This payment is triggered by the 'notice of movement' form processed by the Social Worker to Carer Payments. This form must clearly state the amount of benefit received by the parent in relation to their child and the deductions to be made to fostering allowance.

Child benefit cannot be claimed for a newborn baby who is coming into placement with their parent as they are 'looked after'. When there is a plan for the parent and child to leave the placement and live independently a child benefit claim should be actioned.

The above refers to both residential and non-residential placements.

Parents under 16yrs in residential placements

As parents under the age of 16 are unable to claim Child Benefit, an allowance of £25 per week will be paid to the parent, by the foster carer, to purchase essential items for the child (milk, nappies, wipes etc). This is the equivalent amount of Child Benefit.

A parent under the age of 16 will receive, from the foster carer, pocket money, clothing and savings allowances; this amount will be agreed at the planning meeting and the foster carer will be guided by the Social Worker.

Parents aged 16+yrs in residential placements.

If parents are in receipt of Income Support this amount will be deducted from the fostering allowance and parents are expected to purchase their own food and personal items.

If parents are not in receipt of Income Support the equivalent amount, will be given to the parents by the foster carer.

Parents aged 16+yrs in non-residential placements.

In non-residential placements, the foster carer will receive maintenance allowance for the child and not for the parent.

In non-residential placements where a parent is over 16yrs and has an income/is in receipt of personal benefits, the foster carer will only pay the parent the equivalent amount of Child Benefit, if they are not already in receipt of this.

If new benefits are received / back dated during the time the parent is in placement, parents are expected to refund the department the backdated amount. From this time the parent will continue to receive benefits from the benefits agency, any monies paid from the foster carer will cease and this amount will be deducted from the fostering allowance.

Any changes to benefits / fostering allowances when parent and child are in placement will be discussed between the Social Worker and Supervising Fostering Officer and the amounts adjusted accordingly via Care Payments.

Fees

Residential assessments

In residential placements, Child and Parent Assessment Carers will be paid the placement fee for the parent and child, plus an additional amount equivalent to the second placement fee as an assessment "premium", for the duration of the assessment process, usually 12 weeks.

The assessment "premium" will normally cease upon completion of the carers assessment report which is due 2 weeks after the 12-week assessment.

Non-residential assessments

In non-residential assessments where only the child is resident, Child and Parent Assessment carers will be paid the 1 placement fee for the child, plus an amount equivalent to the second placement fee as an additional assessment "premium", for the duration of the assessment process, usually 12 weeks.

One assessment “premium” will be paid at the second placement fee rate in all situations, including those where both parents are involved in the assessment. West Sussex have specific rates that we pay for a second parent in the placement called a “lodging rate”.

In non-residential situations where a visiting parent/s are having extensive contact in the foster home, consideration should be given at the planning meeting to payment of additional monies for any extra expenses incurred by the foster carer e.g. meals.

National Insurance, Income Tax and Welfare Benefits.

Foster carers need to be aware of West Sussex Fostering Service general guide for foster carers on National Insurance, Income Tax and Welfare Benefits.

Because each carer’s financial situation will differ, it is always important to seek specialist advice about specific and individual circumstances. Foster Carer/s should contact the Inland Revenue, the Department of Work and Pensions, Welfare Benefits Group or the Citizens Advice Bureau who can provide expert advice.

6. Additional Issues

Carers offering Parent and Child Foster placements should undertake only one assessment at any given time;

In situations where assessments/plans have not supported rehabilitation/placement with parent then there are two options open to the team involved with the child. The child to have a planned move to an alternative carer or where possible the child to remain with the Child and Parent Assessment Carer until they move onto permanency. Carers in this situation will receive the fostering allowance and appropriate fee payment for this child. It is expected that alongside this a carer will take on a further child and parent assessment, for which the appropriate allowance and fee payment will be made;

7. Training

Parent and child carers are approved as level 4 Foster carers. There are also additional training needs for these carers that need to be addressed through assessment, formal training, support groups and wider networks as identified in the carer’s Personal Development Plan. This plan is to be reviewed annually.

The additional training for parent and child foster carers could include:

- What is parent and child fostering?
- Understanding, promoting and assessing attachment;
- Tools of assessment;
- Parenting skills;
- Assessing learning disabled parents;
- Safeguarding;
- Recording and report writing;
- Understanding Court and giving evidence.

8. Work Post Assessment

Within the placements there is the flexibility to undertake additional work post assessment which may attract ongoing assessment “premium” payment.

In instances where there is a plan for rehabilitation for example, there have been identified ongoing tasks for the carers including:

- Looking at future support needs;
- Working with parents to access services;
- Addressing particular issues that were identified in the assessment i.e. behaviour management, safety, relationships, routines etc.
- Support parent and child with the transition home;
- Work around education issues for a young parent.

Review / Contacts / References	
Document title:	Parent and Child Placement
Date approved:	11 November 2020
Approving body:	Policy & Practice Steering Group
Last review date:	
Next review date:	October 2022
Document owner:	Assistant Director Corporate Parenting
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