

**Newcastle City Council Parent & Child Foster Care Placements Policy**

The Parent and Child Foster Care Placements Policy and Processes have been designed and written to ensure that action taken by Newcastle City Council Children’s Services is in line with legislation, national policy and guidance. It aims to ensure that all foster carers, supervising social workers, parents and children’s social workers have the same understanding about the placement tasks they are required to undertake, and the legal basis for doing so.

**RELEVANT LINKS**

[Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership](https://www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/)

[Fostering Services Statement of Purpose](https://boltonchildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_fost_serv_sop.html)

[Placements in Foster Care Procedure](https://boltonchildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_place_fost_care.html)

Children and Young Person’s Guide to being Looked After

Foster Carer Handbook

**RELEVANT GUIDANCE**

The Children Act 1989

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Revised February 2011) DFE 2011

Fostering Services Regulations 2011

Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services, DFE 2011

National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011

Care Planning, Placement & Review Regulations 2011

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 **1.** **Introduction**

This policy should be implemented following:

* A pre-birth assessment; or
* Children’s Safeguarding Conference which recommends a parent and child placement; or
* If a case is in Public Law Outline or directed by Legal Meeting
* At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings.

In exceptional circumstances, where the required assessments have not been completed, a clear plan, with timescales, must be agreed at the Pre-placement Agreement Meeting for the completion of the assessment. Parent and child foster care is an exceptional arrangement for very young babies and their parents. In exceptional circumstances the child could be older.

**Legal Context**

(Refer to Coram BAAF Good Practice Guidance 2011).

There are three legal scenarios that apply to parent and child fostering, with different implications depending on the regulations that apply:

**Parent Looked After, Child 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**.

**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.

**Parent not Looked After, Child 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.

 **2.** **Pre Placement Planning Guidance**

The pre-placement meeting and contract 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 (is this working practice in IRS), 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, a Child & Family Assessment should be completed as soon as is practicable.

A placement should be agreed for a maximum of 28 days and reviewed within the statutory review forum. Any decision making regarding extending the placement should be made on the basis of on-going 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 contract which 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 ‘Looked After Child’, 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, and midwife).

Where the child is in placement and subject to either an [**ICO**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/interim_care_order.html) or a [**Care Order**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/care_order.html), [**Parental Responsibility**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/parental_respons.html) 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 pre placement meeting.

At the pre-placement 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 and the parent is under 18 years old.

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.

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

 **3.** **Role of the Foster Carer**

The foster carer(s) will be expected to offer guidance and assistance to the parent in managing the care tasks for the baby. This may include direct instruction or modelling, it may include responding to questions, or it may include practical support such as accompanying the parent to parent/baby groups, health visiting clinic, shopping etc. The placement should provide a safe and friendly environment to provide supervision and support to the parent, to improve and consolidate parenting skills.

The foster carer will be expected to show the parent how any technical appliances work so that they are able to use cooking and cleaning facilities appropriately. If the placement progresses positively it must be expected that the parent demonstrates less reliance on the carers support.

The foster carer should promote and support the key attachment between child and parent.

The foster carer will be expected to keep a daily record noting observations of the parent’s ability to respond to their baby’s needs, manage the routine, and manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform any parenting programme or assessment that has been agreed. The foster carers will be expected to be open and honest about the parent’s strengths and difficulties when recording their observations and the parent must be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations with the support of the child’s social worker.

Foster carers will agree to provide 24 hour support when required as agreed within the pre placement meeting and / contract.

The foster carer will baby-sit for up to one evening per week, subject to contract discussion.

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The fostering team will provide a fully furnished bedroom complete with bed, cot, and cot linen and ensure the parent has access to use the sitting room and home entertainment. The foster carer will make available and provide full use of toys and equipment for both inside and outside the home.

The foster carer and supervising social worker will complete and provide an updated safe care plan in relation to the individual parent and child placement. The foster carer will inform the parent of any household rules and routines and safe care plan.

The foster carer will be expected to periodically check on the care and safety of the child in placement, and therefore must have access to the child at all times whilst in the home environment.

The foster carers should intervene if the level of risk to the child from a parent would be detrimental to their welfare. If any safeguarding issues arise on placement the foster carer must report these immediately to the child’s social worker and their supervising social worker and if this is out of hours report to the Emergency Duty Team.

The foster carer will always seek medical advice or treatment for any fall or injury that a child has sustained. A report of any injury should be made to the child’s social worker and fostering social worker as soon as possible.

The foster carer will respect and give recognition to the importance of a parent and child’s ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, gender, sexuality and disability.

The foster carer will attend pre-placement meetings, family centre meetings, Reviews, [Core Group](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/core_group.html) meetings, planning meetings, [Child Protection Conferences](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/child_prot_conf.html) and any other meetings as required.

Foster carers will receive full information prior to placement from the child’s social worker in relation to both the parent and the child. If the information has not been received the carer must inform the fostering social worker 2 days before the placement commences. If a placement is made on an emergency basis, the foster carer should expect to receive relevant information as soon as possible or at the latest within 5 working days.

The foster carer will liaise with child’s social worker, health visitor and fostering social worker and any other professionals involved.

Should the placement be terminated because of a decision made by the authority relating to a serious breach of the contract, so that the wellbeing of the child is compromised or because the parent has left the placement without the agreement of the local authority, the expectation will be that the child will be moved to a child only placement.

Although the progress of the placement will be reviewed according to the schedule set out in the contract, the child will also be subject to the [Looked After Children Review](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/looked_aft_review.html) process according to the statutory schedule, as will the parent if also looked after. The foster carer will remain subject to the foster care review process.

Foster carers offering parent and child placements may do so alongside existing placements. When carers are holding a vacancy, a new placement can be considered in consultation with all those involved in the existing placement but careful matching is paramount.

It is not appropriate for a foster carer to take fostering leave during a parent and child placement, and no respite will be granted without prior discussion, unless this is as a result of an emergency or has been pre-arranged.

**4.** **Responsibility of the Parent(s)**

Parent(s) will be expected to care for their child at all times (getting up, bathing, feeding, changing under supervision from carer until it is agreed the supervision is no longer necessary).

Parent(s) will be expected to manage the day and bedtime routine, which fits in with the foster carer’s household. When the parent is settling a child for bed it is their responsibility to check on the child throughout the evening and during the night as required.

Parent(s) will be expected to demonstrate their competence in attending to all their child’s physical needs as well as interacting positively with their child.

Parent(s) will be expected to shop, budget and cook for self and child (the majority of the time) and attend to all clothes washing and ironing. One of the placement aims will be for the parent to achieve greater independence and skills in these areas, unless otherwise agreed within the pre placement meeting and / contract. This is dependent upon the parents’ ability and should be discussed within the pre-placement meeting.

The Parent will keep their room tidy and leave the kitchen, bathroom and any other communal areas in a tidy, clean condition after use.

Personal clothing and belongings must be kept in parent’s own room. The foster carer cannot be responsible for property or articles that are lost or damaged.

Parents will contribute to the wellbeing of everyone in the foster carers home and in public by demonstrating non-aggressive, non-threatening behaviours.

If agreed in the contract the foster carer will offer babysitting up to one evening per week; this should be agreed and planned in advance.

Foster carer may make random room checks to ensure safety of parent and child and therefore all bedroom doors must be kept unlocked.

The foster carer will write accurate daily record sheets, which will be shared with parent(s) and social workers on a regular basis. It should be noted that there may be a request by the courts in some circumstances for this type of information.

If there are any differences of opinion on childcare these should be discussed and recorded. However, the parent will need to accept the final decision from the foster carer who will endeavour to contact the health visitor or social worker at the first opportunity.

The foster carer will complete and share the safe care plan with the parent with support from their fostering worker.

Smoking is not permitted inside the foster carer’s home. If a parent smokes it must be in the designated outside area. On returning to the home, the parent must wash their hands before contact with their baby.

If there are other children in the household the parent in placement must not provide any practical or supervisory care.

No alcohol should be kept by the parent in the carer’s home.

No involvement with any illegal substances is permitted in the foster carer’s home. However, it is recognised some parents may be supported in a parent and child placement whilst the parent is supervised by a treatment programme for drug or alcohol misuse. This should be discussed at the pre placement meeting and recorded in the contract. Any medication prescribed for the mother must be safely stored in conjunction with the Safe Care Plan.

Parent should inform the foster carer and child’s social worker of any appointments and check if childcare cover is required.

Parent’s circumstances and history is strictly confidential to the named foster carers and not their families or friends. Parents can feel reassured that no discussions will take place between family members and friends.

Parents over the age of 18 will be DBS enhanced checked and/or Police National Computer checked and the results will be fed into the pre placement risk assessment.

 **5.** **Role of the Fostering Social Worker (FSW)**

All Parent and child foster carers must be fully supported by a designated and experienced Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who will offer support and supervision.

Any known or potential risks to the foster carer and their family from members of the child’s family or others must be assessed. No foster carer or member of the fostering household should knowingly be placed at risk as a consequence of providing a placement.

Supervising Social Worker (SSW) to ensure full parent and child information is passed on by Child’s Social Worker to foster carer prior to placement commencing. If this is not the case then SSW should inform their manager, who will make a decision regarding if the placement goes ahead or is delayed.

Supervising Social Worker will be responsible for monitoring/supporting/supervising/ inspecting the management of the placement.

Supervising Social Worker will visit in the first week of placement and fortnightly visits will take place thereafter to provide supervision and support as well as weekly phone contacts. SSW will also undertake unannounced visits to placement.

Supervising Social Worker will read and sign off all daily record and weekly records and report any issues that are appropriate.

Supervising Social Worker to liaise with their line manager and the child’s social worker to update on placements.

Supervising Social Worker will check with foster carers that they have researched/accessed groups or courses available (if appropriate) for the parent and baby in the local area.

 **6.** **Role of the Child's Social Worker (CSW)**

The child’ social worker must visit the placement regularly and make weekly phone/email contact in addition to the SSW contact with the carer. During these visits Social workers should discuss individually and together with parent and carer how the placement is going in relation to the contract, and provide the opportunity to share concerns/worries.

The child’s social worker should undertake a room check.

The child’s social worker should check out any arranged appointments and childcare cover that needs to be approved by the carers and discussed with the SSW.

The child’s social worker needs to consider the second parent, and attention and scrutiny must be given to the parent’s relationships, both of their involvement in the assessment process and future planning.

Should a dispute arise within the placement, SSW and SW will initially undertake joint visits. If necessary, the Child’s social worker will then arrange a follow up meeting to include parent, SSW and carer and the child’s social workers team manager.

The child’s social workers will liaise with housing benefits and senior management (if necessary) if the placement continues past 13 weeks. At this point, if the parent is in receipt of Housing Benefit then their entitlement will cease unless they return to the property and sleep overnight once a week.

To ensure prompt payment to the carers, the Child’s social worker will inform Fostering of the placement start date, confirm the status of the parent, and if the child is subject to Care Proceedings.

The child’s social worker should provide parent(s) with complaints procedures leaflets. If the parent is also a ‘looked after child’, the SSW should provide a copy of the Children and Young Persons Guide to being Looked After.

**7.** **Looked After Parents**

The Child’s social worker must visit the placement within statutory requirements. The Care Leaver’s social worker will provide an opportunity for the parent to discuss any issues or worries, and will assist the parent to address them.

Foster Carers will support the parent in relation to education, home tuition and legal appointments and provide transport and childcare if necessary.

Regard must be given to the parent’s contact with their family members, time out (with and without baby), babysitting, household tasks and level of practical support.

**8.** **Finance**

**Allowance Breakdown for Parent / Child / Foster Carer**

In undertaking parent and child fostering foster carers will be paid the equivalent of a Tier 4 Payment.

When the parent is a ‘Looked After Child’ themselves, and the child is not the subject of [Care Proceedings](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/care_proceedings.html) payments remain at Tier 4. In these circumstances it is likely that the parent of the child may be ‘looked After’ in the foster home and that the foster carer is undertaking to provide a home for both parent and child in order to support and guide the parent in the care of their child.

If the parent is under 18 years old the carer will be paid Tier 4 but will then have to provide the care element of the fee for both mother and child to provide clothing, food, nappies etc. If the parent is an adult the expectation will be that they claim the relevant benefits for themselves only, whilst taking into account that the placement has no set timescale and could last between 1 day to 12 weeks maximum. In these circumstances the parent will be responsible for providing clothing, food and nappies etc for the baby.

If the parent leaves the placement and the child remains, the carer will revert to the appropriate payment from the scheme of allowances for a child of that age.

If the parent is looked after and remains in the placement and the child moves the carer will revert to the appropriate payment for a child of that age.

The foster carer will be expected to provide all the ingredients to enable the parent to prepare a main meal each day if the mother is under 18 years old, unless stated otherwise in the placement agreement meeting. This becomes the responsibility of the mother if she is an adult

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**Equipment and initial Clothing allowances**

Where both the parent and the child are ‘looked after’, equipment allowance will be provided if required on the authorisation of the Team Manager.

On the ending of a placement, if the parent is moving with the child, the only item that must remain with the foster carer is the cot (parent can take mattress and bedding).

The payments need to be discussed and agreed at the placement planning meeting and form part of the contract.

Where the child is looked after but the parent is not clothing and equipment may be purchased for the child as set out in the foster carers allowance guidance.

**Parent Benefit Claims / Guidance and Entitlements**

The following information can be obtained from the direct.gov website. Online claims can be made and the website has a benefits adviser who will calculate benefits an individual may be entitled to.

What an individual is entitled to will depend on their circumstances and it is always advisable to contact Jobcentre Plus and Her Majesty’s Revenue & Custom (HMRC) who will also advise on which benefits are payable:

* Jobcentre plus;
* HMRC Inland Revenue;
* Income Support;
* Child Benefit.

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