

Telford Fostering Parent & Child Fostering Arrangements Policy



Help support a parent and their child by fostering them together in your home and guide them towards a strong future.

Document Author	Daniel Chell, Fostering Team Manager
Document Owner	
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1. Introduction

It is increasingly common to make an arrangement for a child and parent (usually the mother) live with foster carer(s) where it would be unsafe for a parenting capacity assessment to take place while a parent and child remain in their own home.

Known as 'parent and child fostering arrangements' they are intended for babies under the age of two years and one parent to live in the fostering household (in exceptional circumstances, it may involve two parents, siblings or slightly older children). The criteria for the arrangement is where it has been identified that the threshold for significant harm is met or is likely to be met, or a vulnerable teenage parent (who may or may not be looked after) and their baby need a supportive arrangement to assess parenting capacity.

The arrangements have a key role in care planning for babies, particularly where intensive observation, supervision, support and guidance in parenting skills within a family environment is likely to lead to positive outcomes for children.

The parent and child fostering arrangements policy ensures children's services work in accordance with legislation, national policy and guidance in this often complex area of practice. It aims to ensure that everyone involved in parent and child fostering arrangements has a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the legal framework that underpin these.

Implementation of this policy takes place following,

- Pre-birth assessment which recommends a parent and child arrangement (including where a child in care becomes pregnant and the plan is for them to remain) or;
- Legal planning meeting
- At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings

2. Legal Framework

The primary legislation under which parent and child fostering arrangements fall are:

- **The Children Act 1989** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>
- **The Children Act 2004** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/ukpga/2004/32/contents>
- **The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations**
 - **2010** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/contents/made>
 - **2013** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/984/contents/made>

- **The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011**
<https://legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/581/made> alongside the principles as set out in **The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf
- **Public Law Outline 2014.**

Four scenarios apply to parent and child arrangements:

i. ***Arrangement where the parent is not Looked After and the child is looked after***

In this situation, the parent could be either under or over the age of 18. If under 18, the local authority will have assessed the parent and identified that the parent does not need to be looked after. The level of support the parent requires will also have been determined. The local authority children's services will place the child with the foster carer(s) as a looked after child and the regulations apply to them only.

ii. ***Arrangement where both the parent and child are Looked After***

Where the child becomes 'Looked After' as a result of meeting the threshold for significant harm and the parent is under 18 and already Looked After by the local authority, both will be placed in accordance with the provisions of S22 of the Children Act 1989. The local authority will provide a foster placement to both, in line with the care planning and fostering regulations.

iii. ***Arrangement where the parent is Looked After and the child is not Looked After***

During care proceedings it could be that the local authority place the child of a parent under the age of 18 in a foster placement, under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (placement of child in care with parent). The Fostering Regulations (2011) will apply to the fostering household.

iv. ***Arrangement where neither the parent nor the child are 'Looked After'***

Where the local authority plans to assess parenting capacity in the context of support provided to the family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or pre care proceedings, the parent must agree to the parent and child fostering arrangement. The Fostering Regulations (2011) will apply to the fostering household.

With all the above arrangements, the local authority will be satisfied that the parent and child arrangement will not have an undue impact on the foster carer's responsibilities towards other children in placement. The fostering service should provide any necessary, appropriate support to enable the arrangements to succeed. The fostering service should consult with the social work team for any other children in placement and consider their views when matching for a parent and child arrangement.

3. Finance

Parent and Child arrangements will be paid at Level 4 rates. Allowances paid for these arrangements are detailed below:

1. Arrangement where the parent is not Looked After and the child is looked after

The foster carer will receive an allowance for the child. The professionals involved will agree how the allowance is used to provide for the child. This could be where the foster carer provides the parent with the money to buy items for the child e.g. formula, nappies etc. This will be decided and agreed in the placement planning meeting which will take place prior to the arrangement commencing.

2. Arrangement where both the parent and child are Looked After

The foster carer will receive an allowance for the child and the parent.

3. Arrangement where the parent is Looked After and the child is not Looked After

The foster carer will receive an allowance for the parent and the parent is expected to meet the financial commitments for the child. This will be agreed and decided in the placement planning meeting.

4. Arrangement where neither the parent nor the child are 'Looked After'

The foster carer will receive an allowance for the child and the parent. Financial arrangements will be discussed and agreed in the placement planning meeting in regards to what the parent contributes financially.

These payments reflect the living costs of parent and child living as part of the fostering household, alongside the impact of having another adult living as part of the foster family unit. The enhanced payment reflects the additional complexities and assessment required in these types of arrangements and the knowledge, skills and expertise required of the carer(s), usually where the court are considering a child's welfare and safety.

Payment for skills: Foster carers who have met the criteria to receive Level 3 payments or have significant professional experience will qualify for parent and child placements.

Day Care: The foster carer can request eight hours day care per week for the parent and child they are looking after for the duration of the arrangement. The expectation is that an appropriately matched Telford foster carer is identified at the placement planning meeting to provide this. This is to support foster carers personal and professional development.

Additional financial considerations

Parent's benefits: In the majority of parent and child fostering arrangements, the parent will be in receipt of benefits and expected to use those benefits to provide for themselves and their child (clothing, nappies, formula/food etc.). This is an essential part of any arrangement, because parents need to have the opportunity given to demonstrate their budgeting skills and ability to place their child's needs above their own.

Should a parent not be in receipt of benefits, discussion and agreement needs to be reached at the placement planning meeting (at the latest) about how the foster carer will support the parent to finance looking after themselves and their child and how monies will be spent, while a benefit claim is made. Foster carers will be expected to finance this from the allowance received for the child equivalent to the benefits the parents should be entitled to.

Savings and pocket money: If the parent and/or child is looked after the foster carer will pay pocket money and savings in line with current policy.

1. Placement Request

The process for requesting a parent and child fostering arrangement will be via Protocol and follow the same procedure as for any placement request. This is completed by the child's social worker. Where possible following pre-birth assessments, early alerts will be sent to the placement team to identify the possible need for the parent and child placement. The fostering placements officer will alert Brokerage to the potential need for a Parent and Child placement should an internal foster carer not be identified at the time of the request.

Any risks that the parent/associated person or child may pose to the foster family will be included in the referral, along with the objectives of the arrangement, expected outcomes and timeframe for assessment. This will be made available to the foster carer prior to the agreement of the placement.

Any such Risk Assessment will include specific considerations if the parent is subject

to a drug and/or alcohol treatment program, has a learning disability or mental health problems.

All information (i.e. pre-birth assessment, risk assessment, conference minutes) should be made available to the Placements Officer at the time of the request to help ensure good and safe matching. Failure to do so could result in delay in an arrangement starting, poor outcomes for the child and safeguarding considerations not being suitably managed.

2. Placement Planning

In all parent and child arrangements, a placement planning meeting **MUST** take place before the arrangement starts.

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.

The local authority must clarify the expectations of the foster carer, the parent and other professionals or partner agencies:

- The foster carer - level of observation, supervision, no intervention, intervention, modelling, any specific focus/tasks that require assistance etc.
- The parent - house rules, supervised/unsupervised care of child, contact with others outside of the foster family, how parental responsibility will be exercised, contact arrangements for other family members.
- Other professionals or partner agencies relevant to the parent and child arrangement e.g. health visitor, midwife etc. This will ensure that the parent and child receive the best guidance and support from the outset of the arrangement.
- The Placement Planning Meeting must ensure that foster carers and parents receive the best help and support from the outset, establishing a clear contract clarifying roles and responsibilities to the placement for all parties involved. All Parent and Child arrangements require a signed contract to be in place prior to the arrangement commencing. This should be signed by the parent, foster carer, and child's social worker and fostering social worker.

The service should normally agree a parent and child arrangement for a maximum of a 12-week assessment, with the placement lasting 14 weeks to enable submission of

assessments and the outcome of the assessments shared. However, the period of assessment will be discussed and agreed in the placement planning meeting in relation to the parent and child's needs. Agreement should be reached about how progress towards meeting the objectives of the arrangement will be monitored and the plan should the arrangement need to end.

A review of the placement plan should be held at six weeks to revisit roles and responsibilities and clarify any changes. This meeting must be chaired by the child's social workers team manager. If an assessment is likely to extend beyond 12 weeks, agreement should be given by the service delivery manager for the child, with clear reasons why this is in the child's best interests. This will prevent drift and enhance decision-making. Future plans must be considered at this meeting in regards to the ending of the placement and how the transition is managed.

Once the assessment has been completed and shared with the parent(s), the placement will end. If the decision is made that the child needs to be in the care of the local authority, following the assessment period then a suitable placement should be sought and the child cannot remain with the parent and child foster carer. If the child is to remain in the care of their parent then plans should be made to house the parent and child and the foster carer can support this transition.

a. Expectations

The following expectations of the foster carer(s), parent, child's social worker and fostering social worker are specific to parent and child fostering arrangements and in addition to all usual good practice expected when a child(ren) is placed in foster care.

The Foster Carer(s)

Promote secure attachment between the parent and child.

Promote parent's independent living skills.

Keep daily records including observations of the parent's ability to respond to their child's needs (physical, emotional, developmental), manage routine, manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting, relationships, external stressors etc. These records will also need to include information on the support and advice foster carers are giving and the parent's response to this. This enables the team to track whether or not parents are taking on board advice from both the foster carer and us. These records should be recorded on the templates provided.

Share daily records electronically on a daily basis with the parenting assessment worker and the child's social worker and an update will be provided to the parent on a weekly basis by the parenting assessment worker and the foster carer in the

most appropriate way giving opportunity to discuss strengths and areas for improvement. If the foster carers have any immediate concerns they must inform their supervising social worker at the earliest convenience and they will arrange a meeting with the parenting assessment worker and the child's social worker.

24-hour support when required and transport for the parent and child when appropriate and as agreed in the placement planning meeting.

Babysitting / childcare (i.e. for parental planned appointments or safeguarding reasons) as agreed in the placement planning meeting.

A fully furnished bedroom complete with bed for the parent, Moses basket/cot for the baby, adequate storage etc. The parent should have use of a sitting room with home entertainment and baby will have toys and all necessary equipment for inside and out of the home. If the parent has equipment of his or her own, the foster carer should check that it is suitable, safe and hygienic to use for the child.

Record any interventions the foster carer(s) makes if they consider the child is at risk from a parent in any given moment. The foster carer will communicate this to the child's and fostering social workers as soon as is practical and if outside of office hours the Emergency Duty Team must be informed and this must be recorded in diary records as a significant event.

The child should remain with the foster carer for an agreed period and if appropriate, following any unplanned ending of the parent and child arrangement. This may be where the parent decides that they no longer wish to be assessed for example. This is to give the child's social worker time to make an alternative plan for the child if necessary and limit the amount of disruption the child could experience from any unnecessary moves. The exception to this would be where the parent is Looked After, and the child is not. In this circumstance it might be more appropriate for the parent to remain in their existing foster placement and alternative care be identified for their child (which may or may not be foster care dependent on legal status).

Respite cannot be taken by the foster carer for the duration of a parent and child arrangement, unless in exceptional circumstances (emergency or agreed for specific reasons prior to arrangement starting) and with clear agreement with the professional team.

The foster carer with the parent will undertake a 'memory box' for the child and arrangements made to keep copies of all the information and photographs for the parent.

To keep parent's circumstances and history confidential to the named foster carer(s) and not their families or friends.

The parent

Always care, respond, supervise and ensure their child's safety (with / without foster carer supervision and support) as agreed in placement planning meeting.

Manage their child's routine taking account of the fostering household routines and as agreed at the placement planning meeting.

Always give foster carer access to their child and their room in order that safety, care and welfare can be properly monitored.

Budget, shop and cook for themselves and their child; attend to own and child's washing and ironing; and clean own room.

Ensure any areas of the home they use are tidied/cleaned as appropriate after use.

Be respectful and demonstrate acceptable behaviour to all members of the fostering family and their visitors.

Be responsible for personal clothing and belongings.

Smoking must not be inside the foster home, but in an area outside designated by the foster carer. Hands to be washed before contact with child and remove coats worn when smoking.

Care or supervision must not be provided to other children in the foster home.

No alcohol to be kept by the parent in the carer's home and no keeping or use of illegal substances.

Notice to be given and discussion with the foster carer about any planned appointments where they are needed to look after the child.

Parents over the age of 18 will be subject to Police National Computer (PNC) checks prior to any arrangement starting and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check before or immediately upon the arrangement starting

Fostering Social Worker

The lead senior social worker for parent and child fostering in their area will supervise and support all parent and child foster carers.

To ensure that the placement plan, including risk assessment is shared with the foster carer(s) before the arrangement starts.

To supervise and support the foster family and ensure access to support groups and

training specific to the parent and child tasks, in line with current fostering policy (this will include a schedule of visits with the child's Social Worker as agreed in the Placement Planning Meeting).

To jointly visit the foster carer and parent with the child's social worker should a dispute in the arrangement arise.

Their role and responsibilities will be in accordance with all expectations of managing a foster placement (unannounced visits, safe care plan etc.)

Child's Social Worker

To ensure the foster carer has all the relevant information/paperwork at the outset of the arrangement.

To regularly review the arrangement in line with agreement at the Placement Planning Meeting considering progress, planning and timescales.

To discuss with the parent and carer, individually and jointly what is working well and what are the worries in the arrangement, liaising with the Fostering Social Worker as necessary.

To carry out any assessment required in respect of the parent, informed by the recorded observations of the foster carer, in line with Court timetable or any other timetable set.

To jointly visit the foster carer and parent with the fostering social worker should a dispute in the arrangement arise.

To work with the parent and relevant housing authorities to ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the parent (and child) to move into when the fostering arrangement ends. This includes liaising with the benefits agency (and senior children's service management if necessary), to secure the parents tenancy on a property in the community that they are in receipt of housing benefit for, if the fostering arrangement is likely to continue past 13 weeks. The ending of a parent and child fostering arrangement should not be delayed because of housing difficulties.

To provide parent(s) with the parent and child fostering arrangements information leaflet.

To provide parent(s) with the complaint's procedures leaflet.

To provide parent and carer(s) with an alternative point of contact for any period of annual leave over a week. This will help to ensure consistent and proper oversight

of assessment and support and timely response to any worries that may arise.

Where the outcome of the parent and child fostering arrangement is for rehabilitation of the parent and child to the community, to liaise with the fostering social worker, foster carer and any other relevant agencies to co-ordinate support. This includes discussion and agreement of the foster carer(s) role and responsibility during the initial rehabilitation period and a clear timeframe for their involvement. This is necessary to enable the foster carer(s) and Fostering Service to consider availability for other parent and child arrangements.

Parenting Assessment Worker

Where a parenting assessment is being undertaken the Parenting Assessment worker will provide Parents and Foster Carers with a Parenting assessment outline plan, which will detail expectations of the assessment as well as a schedule of visits and sessions being undertaken with parents and where these sessions will take place.

Parenting Assessment worker and Social Worker will undertake sessions within the foster placement directly with the parent and baby observing all areas of parenting. As the assessment progresses they will undertake teaching in areas of parenting that require support. Records will be kept of all sessions, observations and teaching being offered.

Any areas of concern in relation to parenting identified within the assessment will be shared with Foster Carer and parents, throughout the course of the assessment. Areas of teaching being undertaken will also be shared with the Foster Carer so that this can continue to be put into practice within the placement.

Parenting Assessment worker will ensure regular meetings either face to face or virtually are undertaken with the Foster Carer to track progress in relation to parenting skills being implemented.

During the course of the parenting assessment some teaching sessions will be moved to Jigsaw House to undertake observations of the parent and the baby in a different environment, transport will need to be provided to parents and the baby from the foster carer to get to and from Jigsaw House.

Parenting Assessment workers will schedule and chair parenting assessment reviews, these would usually take place within the Foster placement and include the Parents, Foster Carers and Social Workers involved. These reviews will focus upon the progress of the assessment, strengths, and clearly outline the concerns in relation to parenting as well as discuss a plan of work that will need to be undertaken with the parents going forward.

Parenting assessment workers and social worker undertaking the assessment will share the completed reports and recommendations with parents.

Parent Looked After

Both the child's social worker and foster carer's social worker, along with the foster carer, must ensure that all the expectations are met of working with a Looked After Child where this is the parent. This includes proper placement planning and reviewing for both, individual safe care plans, their specific contact needs and the level of care and support required.

b. Additional considerations

In some circumstances, it may be considered appropriate for a parent to look after their child in the foster carers' home throughout the day, returning to their own home at night, with the child remaining with the foster carer(s). Such an arrangement requires authorisation by the service delivery manager and as with any parent and child arrangement, very clear placement planning and review.