**Policy statement**

Children’s Services will ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting the child’s assessed need. The care plan will set out how any additional needs will be addressed, and suitable support will be provided to ensure that all the child's needs are met whilst in foster care.

**Policy status**

* Children Act 1989
* Children Act Guidance and regulations Vol 2
* Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011
* Care Planning and case review Regulations 2010

**Key Points**

1. The service maintains an availability list, and this is organised based on panel and ADM approval e.g., the age, gender, and number of children a foster carer is approved for and the type of fostering the carer is approved to provide e.g., respite, temporary or permanent.
2. The Matching of children to appropriate carers is based on information given in the Placement request profile, the child’s care plan and recent written assessments of the child and the carers.
3. Long term matching must only be on a planned basis and should be done via a matching meeting.
4. Matching should always be achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant parties where possible and appropriate. Children should be matched with an appropriate foster carer capable of meeting their needs. They should feel welcomed into the foster home, treated, and valued as a member of the family, and included in the everyday life of the family. They should in due course, leave a placement in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel valued.
5. The law requires that when making a specific foster placement the Social worker must be satisfied that fostering is the best way to meet their duties towards the child and that it is the most appropriate placement in the circumstances.
6. If there are already children placed with the foster carer then consent of their social worker **must** be obtained before the making of a new placement to ensure that the needs of all the children of the household are taking into consideration and if necessary additional supports are identified to support a placement.

Standards 15.1 of NMS 2011 asserts that a placement should not be proposed unless it can be reasonably expected to meet the Childs’ assessed needs and the impact on the other children has been considered.

1. Unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children should be given information about the foster carers before arrival. This may include access to photographic information if available. This information needs to be in a format appropriate to the child’s age and understanding.
2. Wherever possible children can visit the foster home and talk to the carers prior to a placement decision being made.

**Standards**

1. Placement decisions should take account of the child’s views considering their age and understanding and, where appropriate the views of the child’s family.
2. Placement decisions consider the child’s educational needs as a priority.
3. Placement decisions should consider the child’s assessed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, race, religion, culture, and language of the foster carers.

1. The assessed developmental needs of the child in relation to gender, disability and sexuality should match as closely as possible to the assessed skills, knowledge, family, and social circumstances of the foster carers.
2. Positive efforts are made to recognise and reward any family or friends of the child that may provide an appropriate placement and, where required, meet the approval requirements of a foster carer.
3. Priority is given to keeping siblings together unless to do so would damage the welfare of the children.
4. Trans-racial and trans-cultural placements should be provided with extra support, including additional training carers as needed so that the child is able to develop and maintain a positive understanding of their cultural heritage.
5. Placements outside of the carer’s approval status, or that exceed the usual fostering limit of three children, can only be made after an exemption is granted by the Fostering Service Manager, the Agency Decision Maker will have oversight of all these arrangements via their role within the Foster Home Review and Panel process.

1. In an emergency a child can be placed with a foster carer outside of their terms of approval but for a maximum of 6 working days. This is only allowed exceptionally in unforeseen circumstances and not as an alternative to making appropriate plans. Each child, where possible, should be given the opportunity of a period of introductions to a proposed foster placement so that she or he can express their views about the placement and become familiar with the carer, the carers family, pets, and the neighbourhood before moving in.

The information needed by the foster carer must be provided before the placement is made although it is expected that when an emergency placement is made it may have to be given at the time of the placement. In exceptional circumstances when the fostering service does not have all the information even at the time of the placement in a case like this it must be provided as soon as possible and within 5 working days.

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| **Type of foster care** | **Responsible individual** | **Task to be completed** | **Timescale** |
| Emergency placement | Duty / OOH SSW | Foster placement to be identified which can realistically meet the immediate needs of the young person requiring foster care. Consideration to be given to the impact of the child or young person being placed upon any other children in placement in considering the suitability of the placement.Emergency placements can last up to 6 working days – after this either the child / young person placed either needs to move to a suitable placement or an exemption / Variation be agreed by the Fostering Service Manager. | Placement to be made immediately if suitable with notification to duty team / service manager and a case recording added to the carers LCS file.  |
| Planned temporary placement | SSW | The allocated SSW should complete the matching matrix with their foster carers. This should explore what the child’s known needs are and what the carer’s known needs are – this will give way to discussion about the support needs of the potential placement. A matching meeting should be held and introductions for the child with the new carer should commence. | SSW should remove the identified foster carer from the availability list (if placing the child/ren results in them having no further availability) and document on LCS that the carer has been matched, the progress of introductions and a placement commencement date alongside the date of the placement planning meeting (within 5 working days of the placement commencing). |
| Exemptions or Emergency variations of approval | Duty SSW / SSW | Exemption / Emergency Variation of Approval form completed by SSW and sent to Fostering Service Manager for approval.  | Document to be completed by SWW / Duty SSW immediately and wherever possible prior to the placement commencing. |

**For the permanent matching of children with foster carers please see the permanent matching procedure.**

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| Policy date: 16.06.22 |
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| Approved by SMT: 27.06.22 |
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