1. There is a statutory requirement (Standards 21.8 – The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011) for DMBC Fostering Service to undertake at least one unannounced foster home visit per year.
2. There is a requirement for DMBC Fostering to inspect all foster homes annually without appointment, to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children - (Standard 10.5 - The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011).
3. DMBC Fostering Service and the wider Childrens Services department should not be refused access to the foster home at any reasonable time of the day. The need for such visits will be rare, though this must take place at least once annually, further visits may be undertaken where this is felt necessary.
4. The purpose of an unannounced visit is to monitor, and quality assure the standards of care being afforded to children in care within the foster home. Within the visit all areas of the physical home environment including garden and out houses should be checked with particular attention given to health and safety matters.
5. It is the responsibility of the allocated Supervising Social Worker to ensure that all their allocated foster homes receive at least 1 unannounced visit annually.
6. Unannounced visits should be completed at a time where young people are in their foster home for example not during school time.
7. The Fostering Service worker who completes the unannounced visit should record the visit on the foster carers LCS file, within the case notes section under the “Foster Care Visit (Unannounced)” heading, uploading the visit proforma to the case note and alerting the Team Manager of any issues that have been identified.
8. A copy of the unannounced home visit proforma should be provided to the foster carer by the allocated supervising social worker at the next supervision session and any issues arising from this visit should be further discussed within this supervision meeting.
9. Any issues arising from the unannounced visit should be addressed initially at the time of the unannounced visit taking place with the foster carers, with remedial actions being identified and agreed by the fostering service worker undertaking the visit and the foster carer.
10. The supervising social worker should be checking that standards are consistent throughout the home e.g., bedrooms for children and young people in care are of the same standard as other bedrooms within the foster home.
11. If any children are sharing a bedroom, it should be checked that a bedroom sharing, and safer caring agreement is completed and up to date.
12. If neither of the foster carers are at home when the unannounced visit is undertaken then the visit should not be continued, even if other household members are at home. It should be recorded that the visit was attempted but a further unannounced visit will need to be undertaken.
13. If the foster carers are not at home and the child in care or young person is home the SSW should check what the arrangements are for supervision of the child or young person (e.g., alternative carer, or if there is none when the carer is expected home).
14. The Fostering Service Worker undertaking the visit should check who is in the foster home and identify those present.
15. If it is not possible for the SSW to see all areas of the home and undertake appropriate checks a further unannounced visit should be completed.
16. If the SSW visits and does not get an answer a note should be left for the carer to say that the fostering service has attempted to undertake a visit unsuccessfully and this should be recorded on the fostering file under case notes. A further visit should take place as soon as possible to ensure that the statutory requirement for at least annual unannounced visits is met.

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