**Process for all connected Persons placement under Reg 24/ 25 and any unregulated placements**

This guidance sets out the Council’s approval, review, and monitoring framework for temporarily approved fostering placements, and for those exceptional circumstances where formal approval has lapsed. This has been developed to ensure that the circumstances of children living in placements which have not yet received full approval from either Fostering Panel or via a court order, are systematically monitored by social workers and scrutinised and endorsed by senior managers within Children and Family Services

All placements for children who are placed with connected people under section 20, police protection or due to a court direction, are initially made under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) and can, if required, be extended under Regulation 25 of this legislation.

Regulation 24 approval is required for the carer of any child with looked after child status who is placed with family and friends. This approval regulates the placement on a temporary basis only, up to a maximum of 16 weeks, while full assessments of the carers are being carried out.

This will allow the suitability of any proposed carer to be assessed at the earliest possible opportunity and prevent a looked after child being placed in a household where any potential risk is unassessed. The completed Regulation 24 assessment (also known as a Viability assessment), must be approved by a Head of Service for the start date of the LAC episode to be agreed and recorded. Ideally this should be completed in a planned way, so panel can agree the LAC status. If a child has already been placed in the proposed temporary foster placement in an emergency, then the Regulation 24 assessment mustbe completed as a matter of urgency and presented to the next available CIN/CP for approval.

Carers approved under Regulation 24 will be allocated a supervising social worker from the fostering service who will visit at least every 6 weeks during the temporary approval period. During this period the child must be visited by their own social worker at once a week until the time of the first LAC review**.**

Subsequently, visits to the child from their social worker must take place at intervals of not more than four weeks until the carer is approved under the 2002 Regulations, or the final hearing has been completed in care proceedings.

All Regulation 24 placements will be reviewed at the Placement Panel at least every 8 weeks and more frequently if deemed necessary. The date of the next review will be made at the time of the initial approval and at subsequent presentations and these reviews should not be deferred. If neither the social worker nor the team manager is available, then the case should be presented by the service manager/head of service. This principle will apply to any temporarily approved or unregulated placement to ensure that there is no gap in senior management oversight.

At the point of 12 weeks from the start of the regulation 24 there should be a discussion between fostering, child’s social worker and manager as to next steps. At this point consideration should be given to seeking approval from the Fostering Panel for the placement to become a Family and Friends placement until the conclusion of the hearings.

Regulation 24 will end after 16 weeks from the date of approval. If the assessment of the family and friends foster carer is not sufficiently complete and the child’s care plan has not been finalised at the point Regulation 24 approval lapses, then an 8-week extension of the temporary approval can be requested.

This extension request is a formal process and a view on the extension of temporary approval must be obtained from the Fostering Panel. This view will be provided to the Agency Decision Maker who will then make the decision as to whether approval should be granted. During the 8-week extension period the placement becomes a Regulation 25 arrangement.

**Regulation 25/Unregulated Placements**

The child’s Social Worker will complete a Regulation 25 approval form and ensure that the case is booked into the Fostering Panel before the Regulation 24 approval has lapsed to ensure there is no gap between approval periods. This is done through liaison with the Fostering Service.

It is envisaged that formal Regulation 25 approval, allowed for 8 weeks only, will lapse in only the most exceptional of circumstances.

The premise behind the statutory framework is that after up to 6 months of temporary approval, a looked after child should be living with carers who have been formally approved as suitable and their Care Plan should have been confirmed.

If these time periods expire and the connected person has not been approved as a foster carer in accordance with the 2011 Regulations, the responsible authority must arrange for an alternative placement and remove the child from the connected person in accordance with Regulation 25(6).

However, unforeseen complications in the carer’s assessment, complex court proceedings and postponements in final hearing dates can lead to delays in securing permanence beyond the control of the Local Authority. Moving a child at this stage may not be compatible with their wellbeing and there are two options available by which the child can remain in placement if a move would be detrimental to them or if the court has refused consent for a move to be made. The temporary carers can be presented to Fostering Panel for full approval, or the Director of Children and Family Services can give consent for a child to remain in an unregulated arrangement for a short period if this is deemed to be in their best interest under the Children Act (1989).

The Placement Panel review prior to the Regulation 25 approval lapsing will consider which of these options is most appropriate. The length of time a placement would have an unregulated status will be a determining factor in which option is agreed.

If the assessment of the family and friends foster carer is not sufficiently complete, or if it is not deemed proportionate for the temporary carers to be presented to Fostering Panel, written consent will be needed from the Director of Children and Family Services for a child to remain in an unregulated placement. If given, this approval must be placed on the files of both the child and their carers and noted in the case summaries.

This approval will be requested by the team manager for the child and signed off by their service manager or head of service, using the template ‘Unregulated Placement Approval’.

Such consent is more likely to be given if the assessment is nearing completion or if there is an end date to the care proceedings in the near future and if the child is thriving in their placement.

Should it be agreed that the temporary carers need to be presented to Fostering Panel for full approval pending the securing of alternative arrangements, then

if a Regulation 25 approval has lapsed, the child’s social worker will continue to visit the child in their placement at least every 4 weeks. The supervising social worker will increase their visits to the carers from at least 6 weekly to at least 4 weekly until the placement is formalised.

The child’s IRO will be notified that the placement has become ‘unregulated’ and their views will be sought, consideration will be given to holding more frequent LAC review meetings.

Unregulated placements will be discussed at the Temporary Approval Placement Panel monthly to ensure senior manager oversight, consider any changes to anticipated end dates and to minimise any avoidable drift. Compliance with this guidance will provide looked after children living in temporary and unregulated arrangements with the appropriate scrutiny and support to ensure that their needs remain central to decision making and care planning.

Karen Alderton

Looked After Children and Care Leavers service.

November 2023

**Flowchart on the process for all Reg 24/ reg 25 and any unregulated placements**

Viability completed and approved by HOS to progress for Family and Friends or SGO assessment.

Regulation 24 placement agreed by Temporary approval panel before Child/ren placed with connected person or as soon as possible if placed as an emergency.

**At 12 weeks post placement**

Review of placement by managers in LAC and Fostering to discuss timeframe for final hearing and to discuss approving as a Family and Friends foster placement until final orders made such as a Special Guardianship Order.

**By 16 weeks**

Regulation 25 approval sought from fostering panel for a further 8 weeks approval.

**Regulation 25**

Approved by Fostering panel.

**By 24 weeks**

Approved by Fostering Panel as a Family and Friends placement.

**By 24 weeks**

Not approved by Fostering Panel as a Family and Friends placement

Temporary approval form to be submitted by team manager to Director of Childrens Services for approval.

Placement now regulated until final orders made.

Director approves placement and gives a date when approval will lapse. Placement is reviewed every month at the temporary placement panel.

Director does not approve.

Children are moved to an alternative regulated placement.

Temporary consent for unregulated placement sent to Director for consent until court final hearing or children are placed in a regulated placement.