

Practice Guidance for Back-up Carers (BUCs)

This practice guide provides clarity around the expectations for seeking information about nominated back-up carers, the assessment process including DBS checks and ensuring there is a BUC agreement and support plan in place.

Definition of Back-up Carer

This is a person, or persons identified by a foster carer (either during the assessment process or when acting as an approved foster carer), who will care for fostered children living within the household, for periods ranging from an overnight stay or longer periods for periods up to four weeks (with Service Manager approval).

Assessment

Once a BUC(s) have been identified and nominated, the SSW must undertake an assessment.

If the BUC(s) are identified during the fostering assessment (pre-approval), the assessment information collected about the BUC(s) should be included by the assessing social worker in the fostering assessment.

If the BUC(s) are identified post-approval, the allocated SSW must undertake a BUC assessment utilising the **Back Up Carer Assessment** form on LCS.

The assessment should follow the format outlined in the template and include information in relation to personal details of the BUC(s) including background information and their general parenting capacities/skills. The SSW should also assess:

- the nature of the back-up care requested.
- the nature of the relationship between BUC and child(ren).
- how the BUC(s) will meet the needs of the child(ren) including their understanding of any safeguarding risk related to the child and their capacity to protect (for example, that if they are family members, they have an understanding about boundaries around family time arrangements etc)
- their understanding for fostering and expectations including safer caring.
- how the visits will be agreed and managed in the absence of the primary foster carer.
- ability of the BUC(s) to work with professionals involved in the child's care.

To inform the assessment further, the SSW should always have a discussion with the child(ren)'s CSW in order to gather their views about the involvement of the BUC(s). This discussion should be included within the assessment.

Should the child/young person be expected to stay overnight on a regular basis with the BUC, the SSW should additionally undertake a Health and Safety Checklist of the BUC's home.

Once complete, the assessment must be agreed and signed by the BUC, the Team Manager and final approval by a Service Manager.

DBS checks

To accompany the BUC assessment, each BUC must also have an up-to-date DBS check. This should be triggered by the SSW during the course of the assessment.

Should the period of care be an emergency, the service may utilise a pre-existing DBS certificate the BUC may have from their employment or other source. If this is not available, the SSW may request a PNC check to be used on a temporary basis.

The assessment should not be presented to the Service Manager for final consideration until a satisfactory DBS check has been received by the service.

If convictions are revealed from a DBS check, a conviction risk assessment must be completed overseen by the Team Manager and signed off by the Service Manager.

BUC Agreement

Once a satisfactory DBS check and the BUC assessment has been approved by a Service Manager, the primary foster carers and BUC(s) should be asked to read and sign the Back Up Carer Agreement (see appendix 1).

Duration of children's stays with BUC(s)

Once a BUC has been assessed, DBS checked and agreed with the Team and Service managers, the primary foster carer is able to arrange visits as they would under their Delegated Responsibility arrangements without having to seek approval each and every time.

For periods longer than 3-nights and up to 1 week, it is advisable for the primary foster carer to consult with their SSW and have their agreement to the stay recorded within their supervision record or a case note added to the carer file on LCS. It is also advisable for the SSW to email the CSW and inform them about the proposed stay.

For stays of longer than 1-week and up to 4-weeks, the primary foster carer is expected to consult with their SSW of their travel plans, and for the SSW to gain Team Manager oversight of the short-break being proposed. Team Manager approval should then be recorded in case notes on LCS where approval has been given.

For stays that are likely to last longer than 4-weeks, the Team Manager should consult with a Service Manager and an end-date for the short-break should be agreed. Where the stay is likely to exceed this end-date, consideration should be given to the commencement of a Regulation 24 kinship carer assessment. The Service Manager should liaise with the relevant Children's Services Team Manager accordingly.

Support to be provided to BUC(s)

If a child’s stay is to be for a period longer than 3-nights, there should be a clear support plan formulated by the SSW with the primary carer, and BUC(s). This support plan should be recorded in the carer’s supervision record or as a separate case note on LCS.

Prior to the child(ren) arriving with the BUC, the SSW should work with the primary carer to ensure the BUC(s) have all the necessary contact details for social workers, EDT and sight of the child(ren)’s Individual Safer Caring Plans.

The SSW should ‘check-in’ with the BUC on a regular basis via telephone or email to ensure the children’s needs are being promoted and the carers are happy with the child(ren)’s care.

If the stay is to last longer than 1-week, the SSW should visit the BUC(s) and see the child(ren).

During a child’s stay with BUC(s), the primary carer(s) should always be contactable by the BUC(s). The primary carer(s) are also expected to remain in touch with the child(ren) during their short-break especially for stays exceeding 3-nights.

Where the BUC(s) is offering a regular pattern of short-breaks to support the stability of a child remaining in the care of their primary carer(s), the frequency of stays and safer caring expectations should be written into the child’s Individual Safer Caring Plan.

Appendix 1

Back up carer agreement

Primary foster carers name(s)	
Address & Contact details	
Back Up Carer(s) name(s)	
Address & Contact details	

Agreement:

Primary foster carers.

Overall responsibility for the children will remain with the primary foster carers. I/we have discussed the child(ren)’s needs including safer caring expectations with the back-up carer(s). I/we have shared the child(ren)’s up-to-date Individual Safer Caring Plans.

We have provided them with emergency contact details including a telephone number for our supervising social worker, Fostering Duty, Emergency Duty Team, and ourselves whilst the child(ren) are in their care.

Signature/s:	
Name/s:	
Date:	

Back up carers

Any issues, concerns or queries, I/we agree to contact the supervising social worker in the first instance. Where the supervising social worker is unavailable, consideration should be given to contacting Fostering Duty, the primary carers and/or the Emergency Duty Team.

I/We agree to abide by expectations of Foster for Bradford while we are acting as back up carers including:

- Not using corporal punishment.
- Providing pocket money as agreed with the primary carer(s).
- Following the primary carer's guidance around behaviour management.
- Promoting the child(ren)'s education, where appropriate.
- Abiding by previously agreed family-time arrangements.

Signature/s:	
Name/s:	
Date:	

Once signed by all parties, this agreement should be uploaded to the primary carer(s)'s file on LCS.