**Fostering Long Term Match Procedure & Flow Chart**

**Purpose**

For children who have a permanence plan of fostering, this procedure outlines the process in which a child is offered long term stability with a foster carer through a matching process with a new or current foster carer.

This process should be read in conjunction with [Placements in Foster Care](https://devonchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_place_fost_care.html?zoom_highlight=matching) which provides further detail on what needs to be considered when assessing the suitability of the match. This will help to inform matching discussions and matching reports.

**Matching Process with Carers for All Children**

1. All plans of long-term fostering should be endorsed at the Child in Care Review.
2. To progress with any match, whether it is with a current or new carers, we need to ensure the carers have an approval for long term fostering. This information is held by Fostering Service. Where there is no approval for long term fostering, the carers will require a change of status, achieved through the Fostering Annual Review policy. The change of status needs to occur before any Matching Meeting is held.
3. For a long-term match with **new carers**, the child’s Social Worker completes a [Finding a Home Request](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/21254/finding-a-home-form-step-by-step-eclipse-guidance.docx) and Finding Home Team review the child’s permanence needs and commence internal and external searches on the basis this is for a long term placement. Once a provisional match is identified the matching process can be finalised following a period of six months of stability of the child living with the new carers.
4. For a long-term match with **current carers** the Child’s Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker have a discussion with the current carers to ensure they understand, agree and are fully committed to the child.
5. Supervising Social Worker, Child’s Social Worker and Carers explore the viability of the match and what support they might need.
6. If the carers are not already approved as long term carers, the Supervising Social Worker will request the change of approval at Fostering Panel and for this to be completed in advanced of any Matching Meeting (see Fostering Annual Review Policy).
7. Child’s Social Worker has a sensitive conversation with parents and child to ascertain their wishes and feelings in respect of the proposed match.
8. Matching Meeting takes place to formally discuss the strengths and vulnerabilities of the match and identify how any support needs will be addressed.

Matching Meeting attendees are:

* Child’s Team Manager (Chair)
* Child's Social Worker
* Current Carers
* Supervising Social Worker;
* Independent Reviewing Officer
* Virtual School
* Child’s School
* Health representative if child has particular health needs for consideration
* Others who can help with the decision making and planning for the child
1. Matching Report [ Blank matching report.docx](https://devoncc-my.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/g/personal/rachel_nall_devon_gov_uk1/EUH3IVCoJo1Gs565WlgcoYsBDSjb00Gb0LI3K9JwvjRlfg?e=xUTZDY&xsdata=MDV8MDJ8UmFjaGVsLk5hbGxAZGV2b24uZ292LnVrfDUxNmI0NmU4Njg0MDQ5OGJhNGM2MDhkYzlmNTJjY2M3fDhkYTEzNzgzY2I2ODQ0M2ZiYjRiOTk3Zjc3ZmQ1YmZifDB8MHw2Mzg1NjA0MjUxNzU2OTE2NTJ8VW5rbm93bnxUV0ZwYkdac2IzZDhleUpXSWpvaU1DNHdMakF3TURBaUxDSlFJam9pVjJsdU16SWlMQ0pCVGlJNklrMWhhV3dpTENKWFZDSTZNbjA9fDB8fHw%3d&sdata=TEVSOUl1N0JJSjlRN3VTVldtajdqdEFIS1NKc2hOQ0hTRU5UMGcrOTFzTT0%3d) is completed jointly by Supervising Social Worker and Child’s Social Worker and authorised by Child’s Team Manager in discussion with the Fostering Manager within 4 weeks of the Matching Meeting. Where agreement for the provisional match is not agreed between the two managers, Service Manager will make final decision to progress to Matching Panel.
2. For all proposed matches with external carers, (those employed via an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)), Head of Service authorisation for the proposed match will need to be obtained prior to progressing to Matching Panel. The documentation listed below is to be sent to the Head of Service for consideration.
3. All Documentation below is sent to Matching Panel within 6 weeks of the Matching Meeting via *mailbox* *childrenssocialworkpanels-mailbox@devon.gov.uk**.*  The match will not be considered by panel without all of the documents listed.
* Matching Report
* Child in Care Review Meeting minutes (most recent)
* Child in Care Review where the long-term fostering plan was endorsed
* Foster Carer’s Annual Review
* Confirmation of Foster Carers approval for long term approval (pre ratified at panel and by ADM).
* Looked After Health Assessment
* Personal Education Plan
1. Matching Panel representatives are:
* Head of Service Corporate Parenting (Chair and Agency Decision Maker)
* Corporate Parenting Service Manager
* Service Manager - Fostering
* Virtual School
* Health: Children in Care Nurse
1. Matching Panel invites are sent to:
* Child’s Social Worker
* Supervising Social Worker
* Foster Carer proposed for match
* Child or Young Person where appropriate and with prior discussion with Panel Chair.
1. Frequency:

Matching Panel will be held once a month.

1. Matching Panel Outcomes:
* Match is endorsed. Child’s Social Worker makes necessary notifications to update the child, their parents and the child’s record.
* Match is not endorsed with an outcome of:
* Defer with recommendations
* Not agreed with decisions being clearly recorded.

**For Children who are residing in an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)**

Costs associated with an IFA placement for a potential long-term match will be sought by Commissioning colleagues. The Social Worker will send outline of costs to mailbox childrenssocialworkpanels-mailbox@devon.gov.uk for consideration and pre-approval to be received and then sent alongside matching paperwork for panel (see section 11).

If you are experiencing any difficulty in obtaining or quality assuring information from the Independent Fostering Agency to support the planning and decision making around a potential match please contact Commissioning for support via mailbox childrenscommissioningsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk



1. **Document Information**

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| **Procedure** | Fostering Long Term Match Procedure & Flow Chart |
| **Date:** | 19.9.2024 |
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1. **Sign Off**

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| Position | **Date** |
| **Family Advisory Board (where applicable)**  | N/A |
| **Child and Young Person Participation (where applicable)** | N/A |
| **Policy Governance Group**  | N/A |
| **Senior Management Team** | Sep 2024 |

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