

Practice Guidance for Changing the Approval Status of Kinship Carers to become Mainstream Carers or for Kinship Carers to Foster a Further Child.

This practice guide provides clarity around the procedures that will allow approved kinship carer(s) to become mainstream carers.

The guidance will also offer a procedure to follow when kinship carer(s) are asked to care or wish to be considered to care for more children (related or not related to the foster children already in their care).

References to Legislation, Regulation and Statutory Guidance (England):

- The Children Act 1989 Sch 7: Foster Parents: Limits on number of foster children
- Fostering Regulations (England) 2011

Introduction

Once again, we must have consideration for the 'usual fostering limit'. This is set at three children (Sch 7 of the Children Act 1989).

This means that no foster carer may foster more than three children unless:

- a) The foster children are all siblings in relation to each other.
- or
- b) The local authority in whose area the foster carer lives exempts the foster carer from the usual fostering limit in relation to specific placements and the foster carers' terms of approval allow it.

When a foster carer is approved, their terms of approval are specified by the fostering service. They may foster a specific named child(ren) or a number of children including age range, gender and type of fostering.

Therefore, when a change to a carers' terms of approval is being proposed the *Practice Guidance for Exemptions and Changes of Approval* must be followed.

Kinship Carers becoming Mainstream Carers

Where kinship carer(s) have demonstrated knowledge and a high-level skill set, they and their SSW may wish for them to be considered for mainstream foster children.

They may continue to be kinship carers alongside becoming mainstream carers, but they must have the space in their home and not exceed the fostering limit in terms of number of children.

Some carers may wish to become mainstream carers, following the departure of their kinship children. It is important such an eventuality is discussed and planned by the carer(s) and

SSW prior to the departure of the child(ren) and the lapse of their approval status as this will shorten the process required to move them across into mainstream.

If the kinship child(ren) move, and the carers' kinship approval status lapses, the carers will need to be re-assessed as mainstream foster carers and follow the usual recruitment procedure for approval.

If the kinship child(ren) remain, and the change is sought prior to their departure, the SSW may apply for a Permanent Change of Approval.

Process for Change of Approval to include Mainstream

The change may be accomplished by two procedures, and the SSW in consultation with their team manager should decide which route to follow.

A) Change via Annual Review

If the carers' annual review is imminent, or in the coming months, the change can be sought within this process.

The SSW should complete the review paperwork in the usual way. Within their SSW report, it should be made clear a Change of Terms of Approval is being requested, and a clear assessment and analysis is undertaken as to why the SSW believes this would be an appropriate change.

There must be consideration by and consent to the change given by the foster carer(s) within their feedback for the review.

There must also be consideration by the CSW and the IRO for the kinship foster child(ren), where appropriate included within their feedback for the review.

Given the significant nature of the change, evidence to support their clear recommendation must be provided for the review process. The evidence should demonstrate the Eligibility Criteria as listed below.

The annual review should also be booked into fostering panel for further consideration prior to the recommendations being considered by the ADM.

B) Change via a review using the Permanent Change of Approval Form on LCS

The **Foster Carer Permanent Change to Terms of Approval** form can be found on LCS and the usual process as detailed with the *Practice Guidance for Exemptions and Changes of Approval* should be followed.

The form should have a clear assessment and analysis of the evidence supporting the recommendation considering the below Eligibility Criteria.

This assessment must include a consent by the foster carer. This cannot be achieved on LCS so the SSW must acquire a consent email from the carer and place this on LCS. The date of this consent must be included in the Permanent Change to Terms of Approval form.

It should be noted the FIRO does not need to be involved in the above process, but their views must be included within the form. They should also be informed by the SSW about any change of terms should it be approved by the ADM.

The views of the kinship child(ren)'s CSW and IRO, where relevant, must also be included in the form.

The form should be forwarded to the Team Manager for their consideration before being forwarded to the ADM.

The carers' terms of approval should be changed on LCS (Approvals section) of a change is agreed by the ADM.

Eligibility Criteria

These criteria should be considered by the SSW with the carer(s) when deciding whether to apply for a change to their terms of approval:

- a) Carer(s) have been approved for longer than 1 year.
- b) Carer(s) have space within their fostering limit.
- c) Carer(s) have a spare bedroom(s) available.
- d) Carer(s) have demonstrated they are able to meet the Fostering Standards in their care of children.
- e) Carer(s) have demonstrated an ability to work well with professionals and advocate on behalf of children.
- f) Carer(s) have shown a commitment to learning and development to enhance their knowledge base and understanding for the impact trauma can have on children's growth and development.

Kinship Carer(s) caring for further Kinship Children

When carer(s) have been specifically approved to care for a certain child or children, their terms of approval should reflect that match.

Social workers may thereafter ask carers to consider further related siblings or other children of extended family to the children currently in their care and therefore a change to their terms of approval will be needed.

This may be considered as a part of a transition plan or placement breakdown, or it may be requested as part of court proceedings or new entry to care.

A) As part of a transition plan or placement breakdown

Where kinship carer(s) are being considered for further children by the Trust outside court proceedings, the type of placement will dictate the process to follow:

- i) Where the placement is needed in an emergency

The SSW should follow the **Change via a review using the Change of Approval Form on LCS** explained above.

- ii) Where the placement is a planned transition

The SSW should follow the **Change via Annual Review** explained above.

The SSW, after consultation with their team manager, should liaise with the FIRO, and where appropriate, should request an early review to consider the change to the carers' terms of approval and subsequent match of the additional children.

In both processes, the Change of Approval for or SSW report for the annual review should include the following information:

- background history
- circumstances of the fostering household
- needs of all the children
- support needs of all the child(ren)
- additional support that will be needed for the family.
- analysis of why the arrival of the additional child(ren) is going to work.

Following the review meeting, the review paperwork, FIRO's report and recommendation should be considered by fostering panel prior to the ADM's decision.

B) As part of court proceedings, or new entry into care

A child or children connected to the kinship carer(s) may become the subject of court proceedings, and the carer(s) has been identified as a person(s) who could offer the child(ren) possible care.

As the carer(s) are already approved, the processes to amend their terms of approval will be the same as those listed above in A).

In addition to the above, it should be recognised that a kinship assessment on the 'new' children may be ordered by the court.

Given the fact that the kinship carers are already approved, they should already have a fostering assessment albeit for different related or unrelated child(ren). The SSW may utilise this document for court but will need to ensure it is redacted appropriately to protect the information of the child(ren) currently in placement.



To accompany the redacted assessment report, the SSW should also submit the Permanent Change of Terms of Approval form or the SSW report/fostering panel minutes depending on which process has been followed. In either case, there should be updating information and a consideration of how the carer(s) will meet the specific needs of the children. For an annual review followed by fostering panel, consent to disclose the panel minutes will also need to be acquired from the fostering chair and ADM.