**Gloucestershire Children’s Safeguarding & Care Services**

**Practice Quality Standard for matching a child with a carer**

**Planning and Decision Making**

A review of the Research and Best Practice about matching shows that there are a number of key and simple features to matching children with carers. These features are no different in substance to matching children with prospective adopters. The key features of best matching practice which are likely to achieve a positive outcome for the child are:

**General**

* Early referral – advance notice – time for all to consider the proposal
* Led by foster carers – informed choice not coercion
* Less prescriptive – e.g. beyond category of approval where the match is positive
* Safe uncertainty – safe risk taking – with enhanced support

**The Child**

* The child’s profile – up-to-date, created with them and approved by them
* The child’s history of trauma, separation and loss – likely behaviour arising
* A real sense of the child’s personality and character
* A personalised account of this child’s wishes, feelings, needs and risks

**The Carer**

* The carer’s profile – accessible, up-to-date, created with them and approved by them
* The carer’s track record – skills and experiences
* A deep and up-to-date understanding of the carer’s strengths and weaknesses
* An understanding of the carer’s current situation/context

**Birth Family and previous Foster Carers**

* Previous carers (those who know the child best) are involved in the matching decision

**Critical Information Checklist for a proposed match**

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| **Is this in place/has this happened** | **Yes/No – Action** |
| **Child** | |
| Is there an up-to-date child profile?  Has the profile been shared with the carer’s Supervising Social Worker?  Has the profile been shared with the carer? |  |
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| Do we have a clear account of the child’s wishes and feelings? |  |
| Do we have a detailed and personalised account of the child’s identity, personality and character? |  |
| Do we have a detailed analysis of the child’s needs and risks? |  |
| Do we have an analysis of the child’s predicted behaviour on admission to care/placement move? |  |

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| **Carer(s)** | |
| Is there an up-to-date carer profile?  Has the profile been shared with the child’s Social Worker?  Has the profile been shared with the Child? |  |
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| Do we have a clear summary of the carer’s skills and experience – their track record in sticking with children? |  |
| Do we have a clear understanding of the carer’s strengths and weaknesses? |  |
| Do we have a clear view of the carer about the proposed placement? |  |
| Do we have a clear understanding of the support needed to make this match successful? |  |
| **Birth and Wider Family** | |
| Do we have the views of the child’s birth family and/or wider family on what they will need from their carers? |  |
| **Previous Foster Carers** | |
| Do we have the views of the child’s birth family and/or wider family on what they will need from their carers? |  |

**Note**: An effective match cannot be made without this critical information being made available to the Panel.

**Critical Matching Considerations**

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| **Questions** | **Responses** |
| What are the child’s views about the proposed carers?  If Ambivalent, what can be done to address the reasons for the ambivalence? | **Positive/Negative/Ambivalent/Neutral**  Reasons: |
| What are the views of the child’s Social Worker to the proposed placement?  If Ambivalent, what can be done to mitigate their concerns? | **Positive/Negative/Ambivalent/Neutral**  Reasons: |
| What are the carer’s views about the proposed Match?  If Neutral or Ambivalent, what can be done to encourage a more positive view? | **Positive/Negative/Ambivalent/Neutral**  Reasons: |
| What are the views of the carer’s Supervising Social Worker to the proposed placement?  If Neutral or Ambivalent, what can be done to mitigate their concerns? | **Positive/Negative/Ambivalent/Neutral**  Reasons: |

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| Is the physical environment appropriate for the child? |  |
| Is the parenting style of the carer appropriate for the child? |  |
| Will the carer be able to understand and respond to the child’s emotional needs? |  |
| Will the carer be able to encourage and enable the child’s interests and activities? |  |
| Will the carer be able to support the child’s school attendance and help with homework? |  |
| Will the carer be able to understand and meet the child’s health needs? |  |
| Will the carer be able to encourage and promote positive family time? |  |
| Will the carers be able to understand and strengthen the child’s identity? |  |
| Have the risks of placement disruption been identified? |  |
| What support will the child need to make this a successful placement? |  |
| What support will the carer need to make this a successful match? |  |

**Panel Decision and Rationale**

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