

# Child & Parent Assessment Team

Information booklet for **parents**



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**Child & Parent Placements** - Our commitment is to provide:

**A safe environment for parents to continue parenting their child with a view to supporting and encouraging them to develop a better understanding of their child's needs and how to adequately meet these, on a consistent basis.**



# 1. Introduction

This information booklet will help you to understand more about what to expect in a child & parent placement. It will also explain what this might mean for you and your child. Social workers and other professionals feel you will benefit from extra support in parenting your child. They think a foster placement for you and your child is needed to ensure your child's safety and well-being.

You may have a range of emotions about your child. You may feel excited about your child and want to be living at home and taking care of your child. You may feel anxious about the plan for you to live in a foster placement with your child or be upset and confused about why this decision is being made.

Parents with chaotic and stressful lives can have an impact upon their ability to parent their children well. Mental health, drug and alcohol misuse problems or learning

disabilities are just some of the issues you may face.

The Child & Parent Assessment Team provides a family-based placement for parents to develop and learn new parenting skills for the safety and well-being of their child. Devon County Council has this 'independent' team to help parents and children stay together.

It would be a good idea to discuss this information with your partner, if you have one, your family, and your solicitor.

The child's safety and well-being is always the primary concern. That's why we provide assessment services to ensure parents and children are placed with the right foster carers for their needs.

The child & parent placement involves placing a child or children and one or both parents in a family home. There you will receive the support and guidance you need from a specialist foster carer, typically over a maximum period of 15 weeks. This will include a day-to-day routine, maintaining links within the local community, review meetings and assessments by professionals. At the end of the assessment period, a report will be completed. If the assessment outcome is positive, you and your child will be supported to move back into the community.

Our foster carers are highly skilled and trained to give the best care possible. They will play a role in providing support and advice to you as well as contributing to the parenting assessment by staying in close communication with professionals.

The purpose of your placement is to support you to develop the parenting skills needed to care for your child and the ability to put the needs of your child first.



## Aims and objectives

- Enable parents to continue to parent their children in a safe environment
- Encourage parents to develop a better understanding of their child's needs and how to apply this independently
- Test out parenting ability in a more natural setting
- Avoid repeat assessments reducing delay in the achievement of permanency for children
- Maintain parents and children close to their local community and families
- Provide support and assessment that is tailored to individual needs and circumstances
- Provide a level of independence from the children's team and care planning process

This is a real opportunity for you to demonstrate that you can work with the foster carers and the other professionals involved to develop the skills needed and to take the actions necessary to safely care for your child in the wider community. Your social worker will make it very clear to you what changes are needed for such a decision to be made and your progress will be reviewed.

## 2. Child & Parent Placements

A child & parent placement is a fostering arrangement where a parent(s) and their child(ren) are placed together in a fostering family. Many placements are made as a result of Care Proceedings and decisions made at court. You may have wanted to live at home with your child but the professionals involved with you have a different view. The social workers may have felt that a foster placement for you and your child or children is the best way to ensure their safety and well-being.

The primary focus of the arrangement is to develop a secure, loving and healthy relationship with you and your child. The key figure for your child should be you. You should be the person providing a healthy environment for their future well-being and good emotional health.

The placement will usually run for about 15 weeks. There may be

some addition to this for outreach and community support from the foster carers.

The placement will begin with an initial **Set-Up meeting**, followed by some time to settle in. After that, the assessment begins with regular **Network Review meetings**.

At the end of the placement, it will be assessed as to what the permanent plan for your child will be. This will either be for your child to continue living with you or to be placed elsewhere, such as with another family member or adoption. The placement could end at any point if there is a serious breach of the placement rules, or the well-being of your child has been compromised.

### Who makes the plans?

The assessing social worker will be working closely with you to undertake an assessment of

whether you can care for your child. You will be required to attend an initial **Set-Up meeting**, usually just before or after your placement begins.

### Assessment

Your assessment will be a continuous review throughout the duration of your placement. The assessment process is not there to catch you out. It is simply a series of recorded observations of how you respond to your child's needs with the support and advice of your foster carer.

### Set-Up meeting

**Se-up meeting** will cover all guidelines and expectations of you and the foster carer, in detail.

The meeting will be specifically tailored to meet your child's needs. Arrangements for finance, contact, future meetings, healthcare and

assessments will all be identified in this meeting. This meeting will determine objectives for the placement as well as the consequences, should you choose to leave in an unplanned way.

#### *Who will attend?*

- Parent or parents
- Child's social worker
- Foster carer(s)
- Supervising social worker
- Assessing social worker
- Any other professional working with you



### 3. Parenting Assessments

Parenting assessments can prove a useful tool when determining the long-term outcomes of vulnerable children. Assessments will be undertaken with a 'team approach' led by the assessing social worker.

Contributions will be made by foster carers, specialist family practitioners and other specialist agencies/ professionals.

At the beginning of your placement, levels of supervision will be very high. As you develop and manage your own routine, supervision levels may reduce. It is expected that you fit in with the household and contribute to the well-being of everyone in the foster carer's home.

At first it may be stressful adjusting

to living in someone else's home. The stakes are high and will be challenging. However, your child's care and well-being are at the heart of the arrangement.



You might find it difficult living apart from your partner or family and friends but it is important that you focus on caring for your child.



### You will be assessed in the following ways:

- Daily written records (which will be shared with you)
- Supervision and social work visits
- Spot-checks

### Observations will be made on:

- Responding to your child's needs, physically and emotionally
- Managing the day and bedtime routine
- Practical tasks such as washing, cooking, shopping and budgeting
- Physical presentation
- Maintaining your bedroom and living areas

### Basic care:

- Ensuring safety
- Emotional warmth
- Stimulation

- Guidance
- Boundaries
- Stability

### Household routines:

- Time telling
- Telephone skills
- Budgeting & shopping
- Cooking
- Washing
- Safety (in and outside the home)
- Parent healthcare
- Relationships and support
- Environment and community



## 4. Expectations

It can take a while for most parents to settle into the foster placement. Initially it can be quite difficult getting used to living within a different family home. The foster carer's home may also be some distance from your home and you may have to get used to living in a different area on a temporary basis.

At the start of the placement you will be required to do things together with your foster carer. This

is to help you settle in and to make sure that you understand what is expected of you in caring for your child or children.

You are likely to have a number of appointments and meetings to attend which will assess your ability to care for your child and your capacity to meet their needs as they grow up. There may be times when you feel frustrated about the plans or disagree with a decision that has been made. It is very important that you consider any decisions about the placement very carefully and do not move out of the placement without discussing it fully with your social worker, as such a move may, in some situations, result in a decision being made that you are not able to continue caring for your child.



## Daily record log

You will be provided with a daily record sheet prepared by the foster carer. You will be asked to add your comments and sign the records.

If there is a difference of opinion, this should be discussed with the foster carer or social worker for the child, and these differences should be recorded.

### Your foster carer will provide:

- 24 hour support, when required
- Transportation, when appropriate and as agreed
- Fully furnished, reasonably sized bedroom with bed and linen
- Communal use of living room, bathroom, kitchen and home entertainment
- Use of toys and equipment
- Child care if you have meetings with professionals

The daily recording is shared with the parents and, if necessary, with the court and other professionals.

**Your circumstances and history are strictly confidential to the foster carers and not available to any family and friends. Be assured that no discussions will take place about your circumstances between a carer and your family members or friends, without your agreement.**



### As a parent you are expected to:

- Care for your child(ren) at all times unless there is a specific agreement for your carer to take over for a specific period of time
  - Manage the day and bedtime routine which needs to fit in with the carer's household
  - Be responsible for checking on your child(ren) throughout the evening if you are in a different room
  - Budget, shop and cook for yourself and your child(ren)
  - Do your own washing and drying regularly
  - Keep your bedroom and communal areas tidy after use
  - Keep personal belongings in your room
  - Contribute to the well-being of everyone in the foster carer's home
  - Keep your bedroom door unlocked, as the carer may make occasional checks to ensure you and your child are safe
- Not smoke anywhere inside the foster carer's home
  - Inform the foster carer of any appointments or assessments and check if childcare is needed
  - Use a mobile phone responsibly
  - Not use any drugs or alcohol during the period of your time in placement
  - Not disclose the placement address to any non-professional, without prior agreements from the assessment team

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

### Parents

While in your placement you are expected to take full responsibility for the care of your child, unless a different arrangement has been agreed. This means you will be preparing bottles and/or meals for your child, providing clothes and toys and meeting your child's basic care needs, for example, bathing your child and washing their clothes. The foster carer will advise and support you to do this, if you feel unsure.

### Foster carers

The foster carers have an important role to play in supporting you and making a record of your progress. They will offer advice and guidance to help you care for your child.

The foster carer will help you develop valuable practical skills, for example, feeding, nurturing and playing with your child.

They might also be able to help with cooking, budgeting and self care

skills if this is needed.

Child & parent foster carers are experienced carers who have looked after a range of different children. They are offered additional training and support to make sure they are skilled in this fostering task.

The foster carers will be asked to observe you with your child and contribute to an assessment of how you care for your child. They will record how things are going in the placement on a daily basis and will look at your basic skills in caring for your child, how you play and stimulate them, how you keep your child safe and your ability to respond to advice and support offered.

These reports will be shared with you and you will be given the opportunity to comment on them. These are then passed to your child's social worker and will help inform the overall assessment and decisions that might be made.

### Social Worker for the Child (SW)

Your child or children will have their own social worker allocated to work with you. It is likely that you will have had some involvement with them as part of the assessment of your parenting. They will continue to visit you and your child in the placement and will be in regular contact with the foster carer about how the placement is going and how you are managing to care for your child. **For any issues relating to the child, always contact the child's social worker first.**

### Fostering Supervising Social Worker (SSW)

Your foster carer will have their own supervising social worker who will work with them to support you in placement. You are likely to meet your foster carer's supervising social worker at meetings and when supervising social worker makes visits.

### Specialist Family Practitioner (SFP)

The family practitioners will conduct a number of assessment tasks and visit the most often. They will offer support to all involved, particularly you and your child.



### Assessing Social Worker (ASW)

Assessing social worker's role is to liaise with the child's social worker, undertake visits to the placement and work closely with the professionals involved. They will contribute to review meetings and provide an assessment report.

### Team Manager of CPAT

The team manager of Child & Parent Assessment Team (CPAT), is responsible for the daily management of the team and will often chair the initial **Set-Up meeting** when the placement commences.

*My contact numbers:*

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## Child & Parent Assessment Team (CPAT)

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