**Frequently Asked Questions: Regulation 24**

*NB: This help sheet is in addition to the current processes and procedures you are required to follow when bringing a child into the care of the Local Authority and does not replace or alter any of these processes or procedures.*

**What is a regulation 24 placement?**

Regulation 24 is a piece of legislation that relates to the ‘immediate placement’ of a child that needs to be accommodated with someone who is known to them, but is not yet an approved foster carer.

If such a placement is made or ‘brokered’, the child or children are Children in Care, and the carer becomes a ‘temporarily approved foster carer’. This temporary approval must be agreed by the Agency Decision Maker and will last for a period of 16 weeks. During those 16 weeks a full fostering assessment must be completed by the fostering service, and full approval sought at the fostering panel.

**How do I know if I have brokered a placement?**

You will have ‘brokered’ a placement if you have asked the carer to care for the child directly and completed a viability assessment.

You will also be considered to have brokered the placement if you have facilitated such an arrangement by telling those with PR to make this placement themselves, taken the children to the carers, or put in any form of agreement with the parents not to remove the children from the carers or restricted their visits to the child.

**What should I do if I feel I need to make an immediate placement under regulation 24?**

The first thing to remember, is that you are seeking to accommodate the child. So you need permission to do so. This must be agreed by your service lead *before* the child is moved. You will also need to get agreement from those with PR (section 20), or have some form of order (PPO, ICO etc.).

You must leave a signed copy of the Delegation of Authority with the Carers – particularly if placing out of hours – as without this they cannot respond to any medical emergencies. They should also be provided with relevant contact details, including yours, EDT and the police (if relevant). They should also be informed (and left with guidance), about the assessment that will follow and their role as a foster carer.

You will need to complete a viability that considers if this is a safe and suitable arrangement and ensure that police checks and Local Authority checks are undertaken on everyone in the household over the age of 18 before the children are left with the proposed carers.

This viability, agreement to accommodate and evidence of checks needs to then be sent to the Agency Decision Maker as soon as possible (ideally within 1 working day), so that the fostering service set up the ‘foster carers’ and start their assessment (you cannot ‘place’ the child on the system until this is done- Only the Fostering Service may set up as kinship foster carer – CYPD System support MUST NOT do this for you)

**How do I know if the carers will be suitable ‘foster carers’ ?**

You need to remember that even if the carers are grandparents, they will be assessed as ‘foster carers’ under the fostering regulations and National Minimum Standards. So you need to think about the basic things that would normally prevent someone from fostering.

For example: Are the police checks clear? Do any members of the household have offences against children? Or any offences that could impact on their safety, (remember you are removing these children from a situation that you feel is unsafe, so therefore do not wish to put them at risk in a new household).

Is the home suitable for the age and needs of the child? What are the sleeping arrangements going to be?

Each child should ideally have their own room, however this is not always possible in Kinship placements. However they MUST have their own bed – if the carers do not have this, you will need to seek approval from your manager to purchase these without delay.

When bedroom sharing will feature, you need to think carefully about any risks that this might pose to the children who will share. It is not really advisable to have CIC sharing with the carers own children, particularly if there is any possible history of abuse.

The foster carer’s home should be safe, clean and reasonably presented. Be mindful of chaotic households, hoarding type evidence, pets and the space available, to not only the child that is being placed, but those who already live there.

Can the carers put the needs of the child first? How will the carers manage everyday things – such as getting the children to school?

It is quite difficult for some Kinship carers to not ‘side’ with the parents – there can be some really complex dynamics or loyalties that could be tested in such arrangements. You will need to think carefully about whether this placement will benefit the children and keep them safe, and whether the carers can work with the department fully.

Do they actually have the time to care? Whilst many people need or chose to balance work and raising children through the use of nurseries, childminders or family members, remember the children you are placing will have suffered trauma. Equally asking a carer to give up work to care for a child will potentially have a very long lasting and significant impact on them. There is no guarantee at this stage, that the children will remain with this carer, so are we asking them to take a very significant risk in terms of income and status that they will not have had time to consider fully.

Also – have you fully explained their role and the fact that they will be subjected to a full fostering assessment? And do they agree to work with the fostering service to compete this in the timescales? (*see guidance for potential foster carers*) – Remember to obtain their bank details on the form from your pack and send to the Fostering TM once ADM decision has been made.

**Who pays for beds or other things that might be needed to support this placement?**

Regulation 24 placements do not receive set up costs from the fostering service. If basic equipment or safety equipment is needed to ensure that the placement can happen, such as buying beds, stair gates, baby bottles etc., then this is the responsibility of the placing social worker and their manager. Other things such as child care will also need to be agreed to by your manager before the placement begins.

Once the ADM has given ‘temporary’ approval of the foster carer, then they will receive the age related maintenance allowance from the fostering service (please note this can take several weeks to get to the carers depending on pay runs – so some S17 funding from your team budget may be needed in the first instance). This funding is not a ‘wage replacement’ and is intended to provide funding towards the keep of the child, including food, heating, clothing etc.

The carers will also be able to claim for mileage undertaken for the department (ie to and from contact/ to and from school/ to and from medical appointments), and child care cost to enable them to attend any fostering training.

They will not be able to claim for holidays until they have attended the fostering panel and have full approval.

**Once I have got the agreement to accommodate the child, and sent the viability to the ADM, what happens next?**

As soon as the ADM agrees the temporary approval of the carers, she sends this to the Friends and Family Team manager, who allocates the assessment to a fostering social worker.

You should arrange a Placement Planning Meeting within 5 days of the child being placed and start to complete parts 1-3 of the full fostering assessment to send to the Fostering social worker ready for the fostering Panel.

**What happens at the Placement Planning Meeting and where should this be held?**

The Placement Planning Meeting (PPM) should normally be held at the home of the carer. This is to ensure that the Fostering Social Worker has an opportunity to see the home environment and complete a risk assessment together with you, the carers, the young person (depending on age etc) and the parents.

At times holding the PPM with the parents at the carers’ home is not felt to be appropriate. In which case it can take place elsewhere. However, it would then question whether this placement is going to be safe – particularly if the child has been accommodated under S20 as the parents have the ‘right’ to know where their child is living.

If the PPM does take place elsewhere, it may be held in two stages, the first being meeting with all parties to discuss the day to day arrangements, this will include contact arrangements, taking to or from school etc. You will need to have signed copies of the Delegation of Authority at hand and ensure that everyone has a copy.

You will also need to share the care plan with everyone, and any information that the carers need to ensure that they are fully informed of the needs of the child (including any abuse or harm they have suffered) and the risks that might need to be considered. These risk include any behaviour of the child, parents etc.

The fostering Social worker will complete the risk assessment and take minutes of the meeting to circulate specifying what has been agreed. The fostering social worker may also set some dates for the assessment and talk through the task of fostering, provide training dates etc. to the carers.

**What happens if the Fostering Service doesn’t feel that placement is suitable?**

The Fostering Social Worker will work closely with you, and will arrange a ‘mid point review’ at around week 6 of their 16 week assessment. This will give everyone a chance to discuss any issues or concerns that are identified as early as possible.

The fostering service will always try to be reasonable around Kinship Placements, but need to ensure that these are safe and suitable. If no one agrees about the suitability of a placement, this may need to go to managers, or even service leads for full instruction. What is important it that everyone puts the child’s needs central to all assessments and works for their best interest.

**Do I need to attend the fostering Panel?**

Yes, you will be expected to attend to answer any questions that the panel may have. Remember you need to provide parts 1-3 of the full fostering assessment ( by week 6 at the latest) and be able to justify why you feel that this placement is the best match for the child. The fostering social worker will inform you as to the date they have booked for panel, but the fostering panel will directly invite you this and provide you with the time that the assessment will be heard.

The ‘foster carer’ will also be invited and expected to attend.

**What if I think a family member or friend of the family may be suitable to care for a child, but it is not needed immediately?**

FFAST are more than happy to undertake planned assessments, and would prefer to do so when possible. All we need from you is the name, address and telephone number of the proposed carers, and a core assessment regarding the child(ren). We do the rest. We will start by completing our own viability – if negative we will send this to you. If positive we will just continue with a full assessment. A planned assessment may take a little longer to complete, as we are not driven by a 16 week timescale, but we always attempt to complete these within 24 weeks.

You will still need to attend the fostering panel to respond to any questions about your plans for the child(ren).

**If I am still not sure, or would like a second opinion about a placement, whom should I contact?**

If you have any questions that have not been addressed by the above, please contact Julie Fisher or Jade Stacey on 01452 425320.