

Department for Children, Adults and Health

**Fostering Service**

**Guidance for Placement Planning Meetings**

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**Introduction**

The need for good placement planning is clear. It is the place;

* to share information
* to sort out who does what
* to decide on the day to day needs of the child or young person and how they will be met with the least disruption to their life
* to listen to the child or young person and to make sure they are helped to settle into a foster home
* to reassure the birth family that their child is in kind and safe hands
* to let the foster carers know the full circumstances of the child or young person which will give them clues as to why they may behave in unexpected ways
* to be clear about who has the right to make what decisions about the child or young person, and to take their views and wishes into account when discussing these things.

When a placement is well planned, everyone is united on focussing on the needs of *this* child, from *this* family, in *this* home. Everyone works together with respect and commitment understanding each other’s different roles and responsibilities. We know that poor placement planning is always a factor in disrupted placements for children and young people.

**Regulations and Roles**

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review are the regulations to follow. They carry the weight of the law.

* A Placement Plan, (in South Glos this is called the “Placement Information” form on Mosaic), must be written before placement or within 5 working days of the beginning of a placement
* A Care Plan must be written before placement or within 10 working days of a placement beginning.

The child’s social worker holds responsibility for the child or young person coming into the foster home. They have to complete the forms and reports in relation to that child and make decisions for that child and family situation.

The supervising social worker knows the foster family very thoroughly, - where they have particular strengths to meet the needs of a child or young person and where their limitations may lie. They also know about all the children in the home, including the carers’ own children. It is their role to hold foster carers to account, to ensure that they meet the needs of all the children they have responsibility for. In order for a child to thrive in the foster family, the whole family dynamic needs consideration, monitoring, supervision and support.

All good practice which leads to the greatest benefit for children and young people, is based on a respectful linking of the two social workers, working together understanding each other’s distinct roles and responsibilities.

**Best Practice**

1. When the “Confirmation Email” is sent out by the Placement Officer, the supervising social worker arranges and chairs a **Placement Planning Meeting**. This must be before, or within 5 working days of the placement starting.
2. The meeting would normally be in the foster carers’ home
3. The minimum attendance at this meeting is the foster carer, the child’s social worker and the supervising social worker. It is far better to include the birth family and the child as well, although heightened emotions at a stressful time in their life may not make this possible. The birth family can see the bedroom where the child will sleep and get a feel for the family he or she will be staying with. If birth parents are unable to be present, consideration should be given to the possibility of including them in the meeting via a video call.

All the information is shared. Sharing information about day-to-day routines is essential, the birth parent is likely to know better than anyone about their child, the foster carer will know what they can do to make sure they meet the child’s needs. It will also include health appointments, school, family time, contacts with friends and hobbies. The supervising social worker will hear what additional support has to be put in place to meet these needs alongside the needs of all the children in the family. The child’s social worker will know exactly what safeguarding requirements or Court instructions are in place

The **Placement Information** and **Care Plan** are written by the child’s social worker and, if they are completed, they are shared at the meeting.

Background information is also needed about the child or young person. Foster carers cannot safely care and make good decisions for children and young people without full information about the history of the child and family. They need to know this so that they can better understand the child’s responses and behaviours. The supervising social worker will be able during future supervision visits to mentor and coach them in responding well to a child if they are also aware of all the background information.

1. Information is gathered for the **Risk Assessment**. It is the supervising social worker’s role to write the risk assessment following the meeting with the information shared both at the meeting and on the Placement Request Form from the child’s social worker. The birth parent and the young person should be given the opportunity to feed in to the risk assessment, eg; “What would you like us to do to make you feel safe if you are angry and start to feel like hitting someone?”

* What risk might this young person pose to themselves?
* What risk do others pose to this young person?
* What risk might this young person pose to others?
* What is the impact on the whole house, - the needs of each individual person living there?

1. **Delegated authority**. The document must be clear, what can the foster carers make decisions about, does this apply to both carers or just one? Does the birth parent understand the implications of this? Along with the Placement Information form, it is a living document and should be reviewed at every child in care review.