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Leicestershire

Parent and Child placement Policy and Guidance

Applies to-

All children

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Parent and Child Foster Care Placements Policy

The Parent and Child Foster Care Placements Policy has been written to ensure that parent and child placements are in line with legislation, national policy and guidance. It aims to ensure that all foster carers, supervising social workers (SSW), parents and children's social workers (CSW) have the same understanding about the placement expectations, and the legal basis for these placements.

This policy may be implemented following:

- A pre-birth assessment recommendation or on conclusion of an assessment post-birth
- At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings.
- Parent and child foster care is a specialist placement for babies or young children and their parents; with carers having additional skills in supporting parents as carers.
- A decision made at CDM

Legal Context

There are three legal scenarios where Leicestershire County Council may consider providing a parent and child foster placement, with different legal implications and regulations that apply.

2.1 Parent Looked After, Child Looked After

Where the parent is under 18 and is looked after by the local authority and the child is also looked after by the local authority, each will be subject to all the requirements of the:

- **Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010**
- **The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011**

2.2 Parent Looked After, Child not Looked After

During Care Proceedings it could be that the looked after child of a parent under the age of 18 is placed with them, in a foster placement, under the **Care Planning, Placement of child in care in placement**). The requirement of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations will apply to both parent and child, but the 2011 Fostering Regulations will apply only to the parent.

2.3 Parent not Looked After, Child Looked After

In this situation the parent could be either under or over the age of 18, and only the child will be subject to all the requirements of the 2010 Care Planning and 2011 Fostering Regulations. The regulations in relation to placement with parents will not apply, and the parent will be considered as part to the fostering household. In this situation the parent, if under 18, will have been assessed but not identified as a child in need in her own right.

Placement planning guidance

3.1 Initial Referral process

Before a parent and child placement can be considered the Family Placement Commissioning Team require the initial referral as well as the Decision to Seek Accommodation form. This may follow a decision made at CDM or endorsed by CDM if urgent. This will detail the purpose of the placement, expected length of the placement and the requirements of foster carers. Any current assessment or adult risk assessment should be attached. This information will help ascertain the suitability of the Parent and Child in house provision and will support the matching process. This information will be shared with supervising social worker and Team around the Child Team Manager

3.2 The Placement meeting and contract

The placement meeting will follow the agenda and contract (see Appendix 1) which will identify roles responsibilities objectives timescales and expectations. Where possible it is always better for placement plans and objectives to be completed prior to placement starting with all relevant assessments, DBS checks and appropriate risk assessment having taken place. These should inform placement agreements. Where a placement is required in an emergency, a PNC check is required for any over 18 year old and assessment should be completed as soon as possible.

3.3 A placement should be agreed for a maximum of **14 weeks** initially plus 2 weeks of outreach support, should the parent and child be rehabilitated back into the community The placement meeting will timetable regular **monthly meetings** for updates and a **Mid-Way review**. The mid way review should take place no later than week 7. This is a requirement of all placements as this will prevent drift and enhance decision making.

- 3.4 An extension to the placement timescale may be agreed, by Fostering (TAC) Team Manager or Service Manager if there is an identified need for continued parenting work or ongoing assessments including in care proceedings.
- 3.5 The Fostering Service recognises the duty to foster carers and parents to ensure that the best help and support is provided from the outset. Establishing a clear contract clarifies roles and responsibilities to the placement for all parties involved.
- 3.6 All placements will have an assessment component. The prime aim of any placement should be to assess the safe parenting capability of the parent. Where the parent is also a Looked After Child, realistic timescales for independent living should form part of the assessment and planning.
- 3.7 However, parent and child foster care placements should not be treated as the only means of assessment or training of parents in parenting skills. The foster carer will inform the assessment, but it is the responsibility of the child's social worker team to complete the parenting assessment.
- 3.8 For a parent and child placement to successfully meet its objectives there must be multi-agency working. The child's social worker will need to take the lead in negotiating with other agencies to ensure that every placement is fully supported (e.g. adult social care, mental health, learning disability, health visiting, family centre and mid-wife). Wherever possible there should be multi agency representation at monthly meetings
- 3.9 Where the child is in placement and subject to either an ICO (interim Care Order) or a Care Order, parental responsibility is shared, and the local authority will need to negotiate with the parent(s) the most appropriate arrangements for exercising their respective parental responsibilities. These arrangements must be discussed, agreed and recorded clearly in the contract at the placement meeting
- 3.10 At the placement meeting a clear statement as to the **objectives** of the placement and the **timescale for assessment** must be provided by the social worker. Those involved in the meeting must agree how progress towards meeting the objectives, how successes will be measured. The plan should be reviewed at each monthly meeting. All objectives and timescales must be made clear to the parent.
- 3.11 The review meeting should make clear **exit plans** with contingencies to ensure no delay

Post Placement

- 4.1 Following the ending of a placement a foster carer may agree to provide further support via an outreach support programme within the parent's home for up to 2 weeks. This arrangement will only be put in place following a post placement planning meeting to outline clear role and responsibilities.
- 4.2 The assessment will have taken into consideration the parent's support network and their involvement should have formed part of the exit plan.
- 4.3 Where the parent is also Looked After, various scenarios could apply. If the parenting assessment concludes that the parent is able to safely parent the child then the aims and timescales of the placement must be re-negotiated to include clear criteria for moving on into independent living, or to another form of supported arrangement not involving fostering. Should, however, the parent be assessed as unable to safely parent, follow on placement plans and care plans will be discussed by all parties including consideration for timescales when within care proceedings. This may also involve a change of placement for the child and/or parent and may if within a section 20 arrangement require consideration of a legal application to secure an order to facilitate this change of placement.
- 4.4 If the parent and child placement is subject to Care Proceedings the child's social worker must complete relevant tasks that relate to Placement with Parents procedures.

Role of the Child's Foster Carer

- 5.1 The foster carer(s) will be expected to offer guidance and assistance to the parent in managing the care tasks for the child. This may include direct instruction or role modelling, it may include responding to questions, or it may include practical support such as accompanying the parent to parent/baby groups, health visiting clinic, shopping etc. This will take account of the parents individual needs including their capacity to respond.
- 5.2 The foster carer will be expected to show the parent how any technical appliances work so that they are able to use the household cooking and cleaning facilities appropriately. If the placement progresses positively it must be expected that the parent demonstrates less reliance on the carers support.
- 5.3 The foster carer should promote and support the key attachment between child and parent by role modelling, encouraging appropriate gestures, talk, play stimulation and physical contact.

- 5.4 The foster carer will be expected to keep daily and weekly record logs using the pro forma provided, (see appendix 2) noting observations of the parent's ability to respond to their child's needs, manage the routine, and manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform any parenting assessment that has been agreed. Where possible the foster carer will meet to discuss the daily logs and together these will be summarised into a weekly log. (see appendix 3) The foster carer will be expected to be open and honest with the parent about the foster carers perspective and their observations regarding the parent's strengths and difficulties. If the parent has not been part of the writing of the weekly log, the parent must be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations in a way that takes account of their capacity. All daily and weekly logs should be given to supervising social worker and shared with the child's social worker. The SSW will upload these onto the carer's file and the CSW will upload them onto the child's file.
- 5.5 If stated and agreed in the placement contract a foster carer may be required to provide 24 hour support, and transport parent and baby when appropriate.
- 5.6 Foster carer may be requested to baby-sit for one evening a week (subject to contract discussion) provided that at least 48 hrs notice is given.
- 5.7 Foster carer will provide a fully furnished bedroom complete with bed, cot, and cot linen and ensure the parent has use of a sitting room with home entertainment. Foster carer will make available and provide full use of toys and equipment for both inside and outside the home.
- 5.8 Foster carer (with the support of the SSW) will complete and provide an updated safe caring plan in relation to the individual parent and child placement. Foster carer will inform parent of any household rules and routines and safe caring plan.
- 5.9 Foster carer will be expected to periodically check on the care and safety of the child in placement, and therefore must have access to the child at all times whilst in the home environment.
- 5.10 Foster carers should intervene if the level of risk to the child from a parent would be detrimental to the child's welfare.
- 5.11 Foster carer will ensure prompt medical advice or treatment is sought for any major injury that a child or parent has sustained. If this is not reported by the parent the foster carers must ensure it is reported. A report of any injury should be made to the child's social worker as soon as possible. If an injury to the child or parent takes place outside of office hours the matter must be

reported to Leicestershire Children's Social Care, Out of Hours Service, telephone 0116 305 0005. It is expected that minor injuries would not require any medical intervention. However the foster carer should record these in the daily log

- 5.12 Foster carer will respect and give recognition to the importance of a parent and child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, gender, sexuality and disability. This will be discussed in the placement contract meeting.
- 5.13 Foster carer will be expected to attend placement meeting, monthly meetings, placement review meetings, Review of Arrangements meetings, and any other meetings as required which may include meetings focused on the needs of the adult in some circumstances.
- 5.14 Foster carers will receive full information prior to placement from the child's social worker in relation to both the parent and the child. If the information has not been received the carer must inform the supervising social worker before the placement commences. If a placement is made on an emergency basis the foster carer should expect to receive relevant information within 72 hours of the placement.
- 5.15 Foster carer will liaise with child's social worker, health visitor and supervising social worker and any other professionals involved.
- 5.16 The progress of the placement will be reviewed according to timescales set out in the contract. However the child will also be subject to looked after children review according to statutory timescales, as will the parent if also looked after. The foster carer will remain subject to the foster carer's review process
- 5.17 Foster carers offering parent and child placements may do so alongside existing long-term placements. When carers are holding a vacancy a new placement can be considered in consultation with all those involved in the existing placement but careful matching is paramount including the level of supervision and support that is required and the impact of this on other children..
- 5.18 Carers will not be expected to have respite during the placement to ensure consistency in the assessment and work with the parent/s. This will only be granted in cases of emergency or if this has been pre-arranged and all parties made aware.

- 5.19 If it is expected that any other parent or significant relative in connection with the child is expected to visit the home, this should be discussed at the contract meeting and any potential risks fully assessed.
- 5.20 In some cases the Foster carer may need to support a parent who cannot read or write. This may include helping the parent understand written information about the baby. This would be supported by the Assessing Worker who may be required to provide pictorial information or instructions
- 5.21. There may be the need to supervise and monitor the care of the baby at a high level which may reduce over the period of the placement subject to progress being made.
- 5.22 The Foster carer may be required to report any Child Protection concerns immediately to the child's social worker.

Responsibilities of the Parent(s)

- 6.1 Parent(s) will be expected to care for their child at all times (getting up, bathing, feeding, changing) under supervision from carer until it is agreed this is no longer necessary. This will be regularly reviewed at monthly meetings.
- 6.2 Parent(s) will be expected to manage the day and bedtime routine, which fits in with the foster carer's household. When the parent is settling a child for bed it is their responsibility to check on the child throughout the evening and during the night as required.
- 6.3 Parent(s) will be expected to demonstrate their competence in attending to all their child's physical needs as well as interacting positively with their child.
- 6.4 Parent(s) will be expected to shop, budget and assist with cooking, and attend to all clothes washing and ironing for self and child. One of the placement aims will be for the parent to achieve greater independence and skill in these areas.
- 6.5 Parent will keep their room tidy and leave the kitchen, bathroom, and any other communal areas in a tidy, clean condition after use.
- 6.6 Personal clothing and belongings must be kept in parent's own room. The foster carer cannot be responsible for property or articles that are lost or damaged.

- 6.7 Parents will contribute to the wellbeing of everyone in the foster carers' home and in public by demonstrating non-aggressive, non-threatening behaviours.
- 6.8 If agreed in the contract the foster carer will offer babysitting. The parent will provide at least 48 hr notice for this request. The parent will return at agreed time. If this is not adhered to the foster carer will contact child's social worker and supervising social worker or report to Out Of Hours if the parent's whereabouts are unknown
- 6.9 Foster carer may make random room checks to ensure safety of parent and child and therefore all bedroom doors must be kept unlocked. If there is no issue concerning the safety of child or parent, the foster carer must leave the bedroom if requested to do so
- 6.10 The parent will be made aware that the foster carer will write accurate daily logs, and weekly logs. They will be invited to write and discuss the weekly logs where appropriate. If they have not been involved at this stage the record logs will be shared with parent(s) and signed by both parent(s) and carer.
- 6.11 If there are any differences of opinion on childcare these should be discussed and recorded. However, the parent will need to accept the final decision from the foster carer who will endeavour to contact the relevant professional at the first opportunity.
- 6.12 The foster carer will complete and share the safe caring plan with the parent.
- 6.13 Smoking is not permitted inside the foster carer's home. If a parent smokes it must be in the designated outside area. On returning to the home, the parent must wash their hands before contact with their baby.
- 6.14 If there are other children in the household the parent in placement must not provide any practical or supervisory care to the other children.
- 6.15 No alcohol should be kept by the parent in the carer's home.
- 6.16 No involvement with any illegal substances is permitted in the foster carer's home. However, it is recognised some parents may be supported in a parent and child placement whilst the parent is on a supervised treatment programme for drug or alcohol misuse.
- 6.17 Parent should inform the foster carer and child's social worker of any appointments, and ensure appropriate childcare arrangements have been made.
- 6.18 Parent's circumstances and history is strictly confidential to the named foster carers and not to be disclosed to their families or friends. Parents can feel

reassured that no discussions will take place between family members and friends.

- 6.19 Parents over the age of 18 will be DBS checked and/or Police National Computer checked and the results will be fed into the placement risk assessment.
- 6.20 A parent's capacity will always be taken into account when making placements and agreeing the type and level of support that is required. Their willingness to engage in the support provided will be a factor in the decision to proceed with the placement.

Role of the Supervising social worker

- 7.1 All parent and child foster carers must be fully supported by a designated and experienced supervising social worker who will offer 4 weekly support and supervision visits
- 7.2 Any known or potential risks to foster carer and family from members of the child's family or others must be assessed. No foster carer or member of the fostering household should knowingly be placed at risk as a consequence of providing a placement.
- 7.3 Supervising social worker will ensure full parent and child information is passed on by child's social worker to foster carer prior to placement commencing. If this is not the case then supervising social worker will contact child's social worker requesting this information is passed to the foster carer no more than 72 hours after the commencement of the placement.
- 7.4 Supervising social worker will be responsible for monitoring and inspecting the management of the placement.
- 7.5 Supervising social worker will visit in the first week of placement and four weekly thereafter to provide supervision and support as well as regular phone contacts. The supervising social worker will also undertake unannounced visits. The supervising social worker should be given access to all rooms in the home.
- 7.6 The supervising social worker will read and sign off all record logs and report any issues that are appropriate. The supervising social worker will discuss with the carer the recorded observation to ensure objectivity remains.
- 7.7 The supervising social worker will liaise with the child's social worker to update them on placement.

- 7.8 The supervising social worker will inform foster carers of any annual leave of one week plus.
- 7.9 The supervising social worker will check with foster carers that they have researched/accessed groups or courses available for the parent and baby in the local area.

Role of the Child's Social Worker

- 8.1 A member of the child's social work team will visit the placement every in line with statutory requirements with a visit within first week of placement and no less than every 2 weeks and make regular phone call/email contact in addition to the supervising social worker's contact with the carer. During these visits child's social workers should discuss individually and together with parent and carer how the placement is going in relation to the contract, and provide opportunity to share concerns/worries.
- 8.2 Child's social worker should undertake a parent and child's room check.
- 8.3 Child's social worker must arrange and chair monthly meetings following the placement agreement meeting. These meetings should be structured around the original placement contract, and should highlight placement progress.
- 8.4 A date for the Midway meeting will be set at the initial placement meeting. The mid way review will be chaired by the Fostering team manager or supervising social worker. The review should consider the placement exit plan, contingency plans and future plans for family.
- 8.5 Child's social worker should find out about any arranged appointments and ensure the foster carer is consulted regarding any childcare cover required
- 8.6 Child's social worker needs to consider the second parent, and attention and scrutiny must be given to the parent's relationships, both of their involvement in the assessment process and future planning.
- 8.7 Should a dispute arise within the placement, the supervising social worker and child's social worker will undertake a joint visit. Should issues not be resolved the child's social worker will then arrange a follow up meeting to include parent, the supervising social worker and carer and team managers.
- 8.8 To ensure prompt payment to the carers, the child's social worker will inform Family Placement Commissioning team of the placement start date, confirm the status of the parent, and if the child is subject to Care Proceedings.

- 8.9 Child's social worker must ensure that the carer has all relevant information by the date of the placement planning meeting. If the placement is made in an emergency basis this information will be shared no later than 72 hours after the commencement of the placement.
- 8.10 Child's social worker should provide parent(s) with complaints procedures information
- 8.11 Child's social worker will inform carers of any arranged annual leave of one week plus and provide another point of contact.

Looked After Parents

- 9.1 The parent's social worker must visit the placement within the first week and then a minimum of every four weeks to meet with the parent and the foster carer. The parent's social worker will also provide an opportunity for the parent to discuss any issues or worries, and will assist the parent in addressing them.
- 9.2 Parent's social worker, child's social worker and supervising social worker must work closely together in monitoring and reviewing the placement.
- 9.3 The parent's social worker should attend the placement agreement meeting and review meetings as these are essential meeting in preparing the parent for a change of placement. The parent's responsibilities will be referred to in this meeting.
- 9.4 Foster Carers will support the parent in relation to education, home tuition and legal appointments and provide transport and childcare if necessary.
- 9.5 Regard must be given to the parent's contact with their family members, time out (with and without baby), babysitting, household tasks and appropriate level of practical support.
- 9.6 A list of daily tasks for parent to complete, in relation to the child, and their own routine, will be used by the carer to support expectations of parent.
- 9.7 Any known or potential risks to foster carer and family from members of the parent's family or others must be assessed prior to placement commencing. No foster carer or member of the fostering household should knowingly be placed in a position of risk as a consequence of providing of providing a parent and child placement.

Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix i) Placement planning meeting contract
- 10.2 Appendix ii) Daily logs template
- 10.3 Appendix iii) Weekly logs template