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Parent and Child

Fostering

Handbook

2022

**Introduction**

Parent and child arrangements involve complex and challenging issues for Foster Parents and PCFS recognises that they need to receive a high level of support and additional training to meet the specific demands of this type of arrangement.

PCFS provides a fostering service that includes parent/s and child arrangements with Foster Parents that are trained to observe interaction between parent and child alongside offering practical guidance to the parent and child placed with them, likely to leading to more positive outcomes for children. All PCFS Foster Parents offering parent and child provision are approved specifically for this service and PCFS have appropriate policies and procedures in this respect and support specialist Foster Parent and child fostering arrangements with this handbook.

This handbook ensures that PCFS works in accordance with the legislation, national policies and guidance. It aims to ensure that everyone involved in parent and child fostering arrangements have the same understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the legal framework that underpins this.

Parent and child fostering is a specialist fostering arrangement in which a child and their mother, and/or father, live with approved Foster Parents in a formalised arrangement. According to the Department of Education DfE 2019, 5% of Foster Parents in England in 2020 were approved to provide parent and child foster care.

The growth of parent and child fostering in England has been in relation to parents, mainly adults, whose ability to safely care for their child in the community is in question, and where the family court is involved. Historically these parents would have been assessed within a residential setting while a specialist assessment of their parenting took place. However, changes to legal aid funding in England in October 2007 meant the costs relating to a residential assessment of a child could no longer be charged to the Legal Services Commission leaving the local authority responsible for the costs. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the availability of residential placements.

The solution has been to arrange for the parent/s and child to be placed together in a foster home and this has increasingly become the norm. A CoramBAAF organised focus group in October 2019 suggests that across England the demand for parent and child foster care continues to grow. It has become clear that there is an increasing number of complex families, often involving fathers as well as mothers and with multiple children. Practitioners suggest that drug and alcohol issues were common factors in the concerns about parents, as is domestic abuse.

**Legislation**

The primary legislation under which Parent/s and Child Fostering Arrangements falls are the Children Act 1989 and The Child Act 2004. Parent/s and child fostering arrangements must, dependant on the legal status of parent and child, also comply with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. PCFS has also considered the Statutory Guidance (Volume 4: *Fostering services)* updated in 2011 that specifically addresses the issue of parent and child fostering.

PCFS always considers any person who is living with a Foster Parent as part of a parent and child arrangement as a member of the Foster Parents’ household for the purposes of regulations. This means the parent of a child, who may be an adult, is part of the fostering household with all that implies in terms of the suitability of the household to foster. There is no requirement for a DBS check to be completed prior to another person joining the household; PCFS safer care policy includes a statement of measures to be taken to safeguard children placed with Foster Parents before any arrangements are made for a parent to join the household.

PCFS recognises that where an adult parent has committed a specified offence they can only be considered for a parent and child arrangement under the exemption to foster regulations set out in regulation 26 (8) because they would be deemed a member of the fostering household. The Foster Parent’s approval would need to be reconsidered and the welfare of the child being fostered considered. No further unrelated child can be placed while that parent is part of the fostering household.

Statutory guidance (2.14) states that when arrangements are made for a parent and child to live together with Foster Parents the responsible authority must take particular care to clarify the nature of the arrangement in whatever circumstance. PCFS will support and seek clarification of the respective roles of the Foster Parent/s and the parent in relation to the child to further support the arrangements.

There are three basic legal scenarios that apply to parent and child fostering, with different implications depending on the specific arrangements and circumstances.

1. The parent is under 18 and is looked after by the local authority and the child is also looked after by the local authority

2. The parent is an adult, and their child is looked after by the local authority.

3. The parent is an adult or under 18, and the local authority takes the view that the child is being cared for by their parent and does not need to be looked after

It's clear that the placing local authority and PCFS need to carefully consider the benefits and/or risks associated with each of these in relation to the specific needs in each individual case. And this is considered during the matching and planning process.

**Context from Research**

CoramBAAF suggests that there is surprisingly little good quality research about parent/s and child fostering in the UK. However, while there have been no large-scale research studies on parent and child arrangements there have been a number of small studies and serious case reviews. While it is difficult to reach any firm conclusions there are a number of common themes and this provides valuable information about what appears to make Foster Parent and Child Arrangements work well and what policy and practice is needed to support them.

1. Positive benefits of parent and child fostering

There is a consensus that parent and child fostering can offer a very effective way of supporting parents to care for their children. Parent and child arrangements provide much needed security and support to both the parent and their child. This level of support enables a parent/s to demonstrate some good parenting skills. Whilst acknowledging the positive benefits of such placements it must also be recognised that the work can be challenging; both for the Foster Parent/s and also for the birth parent/s.

1. Roles responsibilities and pre-arrangement planning

It is important to ensure that the various roles and responsibilities of all parties are clearly established and understood, and good prearrangement planning is crucial in achieving this. Lack of clarity is a major factor when things go wrong; Foster Parents themselves note the importance of clear written agreements, including clarity about contact with a partner or family. Agreement is particularly relevant to clarify where Foster Parents are offering support or where they are assessing the birth parent/s. Further consideration during planning arrangements is the importance of the practical issues, such as finances and any agreed respite support for the Foster Parent/s.

1. Relationship between Foster Parent and the child’s parent

The importance of the relationship between the Foster Parent/s and the birth parent/s is a theme raised in a number of studies and the significance of this in terms of enabling positive outcomes. The general consensus is that where the birth parent/s have made progress this was reflected in the relationship between the Foster Parent/s and the birth parent/s; where there is a lack of trust and poor communication this has led to a deterioration in the overall outcomes.

PCFS provides a service where parent/s and children will receive nurture and warmth. It is acknowledged that some parent/s may have had previous children removed and may feel disempowered and resentful to find themselves living with Foster Parent/s. These issues need consideration and discussions at the start of a placement; it is also suggested that parent and child arrangements work better where birth parent/s have the opportunity to meet their Foster Parent/s before the arrangement has begun.

1. Effective support to parent and child Foster Parent/s

A number of studies highlight the importance of providing Foster Parent/s with good support from both their own supervising social worker and also from the child’s social worker. Again, the importance of good communication and, wherever possible, of ensuring that social workers are consistent for the duration of the parent and child arrangement is discussed. Research also highlights the need for effective training not only for Foster Parents but also for supervising social workers and local authority social workers supporting the assessment for parent and child arrangements. Alongside a holistic approach to training PCFS supports training that includes the referral and matching staff team and ensures good matching recording and child protection procedures.

1. Multi agency working and wider support

Multi agency working matters at all stages of the parent and child arrangement process and the importance of health professionals working closely with the network team is particularly relevant for parent and child fostering

1. The importance of information sharing

While assessments will focus on the risks of the current positive parenting it is essential it takes into account past history and to assess the likelihood of sustaining progress. This is often on specific issues and tasks discussed at the planning stage of the referral process.

**The Practice Framework**

The purpose of parent and child fostering:

There are different types of parent and child arrangements and they each serve a different purpose. While there is some overlap they can broadly be differentiated as offering either assessment arrangements, support arrangements, or holding arrangements.

1. Assessment arrangements are probably the most common type of parent and child fostering arrangement and allow for a time defined clear structured assessment with identified aims and objectives; these arrangements are usually commissioned by local authorities or court ordered.
2. Support arrangements place the emphasis on supporting and helping the parent rather than assessing their parenting. These arrangements will be most appropriate in situations where the risks are assessed as relatively low and it is anticipated that the parent will continue to fully care for their child. These arrangements are especially valid for very young parents were the Foster Parents can take on a nurturing and teaching role, often prior to undergoing a full assessment if required.
3. Holding arrangements this is an arrangement where the parent and child live in a foster home but there's no formal assessment being undertaken and no specific plan to work to support the parent with the parenting tasks. Often these will be time limited arrangements while awaiting another arrangement or court listing or to allow the local authority time to consider the most appropriate care plan.

While PCFS will work to any of the above frameworks it is more usual for referrals to be for assessment arrangements, with the addition of support that is requested. PCFS has assessed Foster Parents to take on this role in particular and provide specific and relevant training. PCFS has developed dedicated parent and child fostering placements, training and support that are specific to this task. PCFS continues to develop practice that maximises the chances of placement success with positive outcomes

**Roles and Responsibilities**

PCFS have specific expectations for parent and child arrangements, but they are **in addition** to the usual good practice expected from all PCFS Foster Parents for the care of all children and young people. SEE ALSO ‘FOSTER PARENTS MANUAL’

Foster Parents will: -

* Promote a secure attachment between child and parent.
* Complete daily recording including observations of the parent’s ability to respond to their child’s needs, physically, emotionally and developmentally. How routine is managed and maintained as well as day to day practical tasks such as washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting and relationships. Stress triggers and strategies to manage anxiety and tension.
* Daily records will be shared with the parent in the most appropriate way and the opportunity to discuss strengths and areas for improvement presented.
* Offer 24 hour support when required and transport for the parent and child when appropriate and agreed.
* Provide babysitting/childcare as agreed for parental planned appointments or for safeguarding reason.
* Make available a fully furnished bedroom complete with bed for the parent, Moses basket or cot for the baby and adequate storage. The parent should have access and use of a sitting room with home entertainment and baby will have toys and all necessary equipment for inside and outside of the home. If the parent has their own equipment this should be checked by the Foster Parent as suitable, safe and hygienic to be used.
* Intervene if the Foster Parent considers the child is at risk from the parent at any given moment. This will be communicated to the child and supervising social workers (SSW) as soon as it is practical and recorded in diary notes as a significant event.
* Continue to care for the child for an agreed period, if appropriate, following any unplanned ending of the parent and child arrangement. This is to give the team around the child adequate time to put different plans in place for the child if necessary and to limit the amount of disruption the child could experience from any unnecessary moves. The expectation to this could be when the parent is looked after, and the child is not. In this circumstance, it might be appropriate for the parent to remain in their existing foster placement and an alternative Foster Parent identified for their child, which may or may not be fostering, dependent on legal status.
* Overnight respite cannot be taken by Foster Parent/s for the duration of the parent and child agreement. If, and this is in exceptional circumstances, emergency respite is requested this will be in agreement with the professional team.
* A memory box for the child will be undertaken by the Foster Parent working with the parent and arrangements made for copies of all the information and photographs will to be kept for the parent and the child’s memory box.
* The parent’s circumstances and history will be kept confidential to the named Foster Parent/s and not shared with their families or friends unless previously agreed.

The Parent will: -

* Always care, respond, supervise and ensure their child’s safety, with or without Foster Parent supervision and support, as agreed in the placement planning meeting.
* Manage their child’s routine taking account of the fostering household, meetings and appointments as agreed in the placement planning meeting.
* Always give Foster Parents access to their child and their room, in order that safety, care and welfare can be properly monitored.
* Budget, shop and cook for themselves and their child; attend to their own and their child’s washing and ironing; and clean their own room.
* Ensure any areas of the house they use are tidied and cleaned as appropriate after use.
* Be respectful and demonstrate acceptable behaviour to all members of the fostering family and their visitors.
* Be responsible for personal clothing and belongings.
* Smoke outside the house, in an area designated by the Foster Parent/s. Coats worn when smoking must be removed, and hands must be washed before contact with their child.
* Are not to care or provide supervision for other children in the foster home.
* Are not to keep alcohol in a Foster Parent’s home and will not keep or use of illegal substances in the home.
* Give notice and discuss with Foster Parent/s of any planned appointments where they need childcare.
* Will, if over the age of 18, be subjected to Police National Computer checks prior to any arrangements starting. (Disclosure and Barring Service checks will begin immediately if agreed appropriate at the planning stage).

Supervising Social Worker (SSW) will: -

* Ensure that placement planning, including risk assessments, are shared with the Foster Parent/s before the arrangement starts.
* Supervise and support the foster family and ensure access to support groups and training specific to the parent and child tasks. In line with current fostering policy this will include a schedule of visits with the child’s Social Worker agreed in the placement planning meeting.
* To jointly visit the Foster Parent/s and parent/s with the child’s Social Worker should any disputes or issues in the arrangement arise.
* Ensure their role and responsibilities are in accordance with all expectations of managing a foster placement (unannounced visits, safe care plan etc.).

Childs Social Worker will: -

* Ensure the Foster Parent/s have all the relevant information and paperwork at the outset of the arrangement.
* Regularly review the arrangement remains in-line with the agreement at the Placement Planning Meeting considering progress, planning and timescales.
* Discuss with the parent/s and Foster Parent/s, individually and jointly what is working well and what the worries are in the arrangement, liaising with the Foster Parent/s SSW as necessary.
* Carry out any assessment required in respect of the parent, informed by the logs and recorded observations of the Foster Parent/s and in line with court timetables.
* Consider the second parent, with attention given to parental relationships, assessment of risk and future planning.
* Jointly visit the Foster Parent/s and parent/s with the supervising social worker should a dispute in the arrangement arise.
* Work with the parent/s and relevant housing authorities to ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the parent, and child, to move into when the fostering arrangement ends. This includes liaising with the benefits agency (and senior children service management if necessary) to secure the parents tenancy on a property in the community. To ensure they are in receipt of housing benefit if the fostering arrangement is likely to continue past thirteen weeks. This is to ensure that the ending of the parent and child fostering arrangement is not delayed as a result of housing difficulties.
* Provide parent/s with the Local Authority Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements information leaflet.
* Provide parent/s with the Local Authority Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements complaints procedure leaflet.
* Provide the parent and Foster Parent/s with an alternative point of contact for any period of annual leave over a week. This will help to ensure consistency and proper oversight of the assessment as well as support and timely responses to any worries that may arise.
* Where the outcome of the parent and child fostering arrangement is for rehabilitation of the parent/s and the child to the community, liaise with the Foster Parent/s and any other relevant agencies to coordinate support. This should include discussions and agreement of the Foster Parent/s role and responsibilities during the initial rehabilitation period and provide a clear time frame for the Foster Parent/s involvement. This is necessary to enable Foster Parent/s and PCFS to consider availability for other parent and child arrangements.

Where parent/s are also a Child in Care - Both the child’s social worker and the Foster Parent/s SSW, along with the Foster Parent/s, must ensure that all the expectations are met when working with a child in care where this is the parent. This includes proper placement planning and reviewing for both, individual self-care plans, their specific contact needs and the level of care and support needed.

**Specialist Assessment and Approval as Parent and Child Foster Parents**

The Department of Education in 2010 make the point that when considering the approval of Parent/s and Child Foster Parent/s the fostering service need to satisfy themselves that the proposed arrangements will not impact unduly on the Foster Parent/s responsibilities towards other children, PCFS consider this is vital for placement stability and will support Foster Parent/s through the initial referral process and placement planning meetings.

Fostering panel and terms of approval – PCFS will ensure that fostering panel members and the ADM are provided with training to understand the specific challenges for Foster Parents involved in parent and child arrangements so they can effectively scrutinise such applications. This will be reflected in the terms of approval that are given and will require consideration on how the skills and experience of the Foster Parent/s are relevant to providing parent and child arrangements.

PCFS has developed a Parent and Child Fostering Assessment tool, based on the template from CoramBAAF, to be used for parent and child Foster Parent/s. For newly approved Foster Parent/s the report is intended to be used in conjunction with the Form F. For existing Foster Parent/s taking on parent and child fostering as a specific task it can be used as part of the fostering review panel paperwork.

Should Parent and Child Foster Parents have other placed children in their household?

Given the issues involved in providing parent and child foster arrangements PCFS has a clear policy about this and there are two key factors that need to be considered.

1. Safeguarding an adult parent as a considered member of the fostering household, will have had difficulties in parenting their child adequately and may have been deemed abusive or neglectful is a major consideration. A police check (DBS) may not have been completed before moving in. PCFS will complete a safe care plan and Risk Management Strategy in line with PCFS safeguarding policy that ensures the safety of any other child living in the foster home.
2. Time commitment; this considers whether the Foster Parent/s have enough time to adequately meet the needs of another child placed alongside that of the Parent and Child. PCFS recognises that some fostering households, particularly if there are two full time Foster Parents may have the capacity to manage some very demanding arrangements. So, each case will be assessed on its individual merits.

**Training and Support**

The Supervising Social Worker will make contact with the Foster Parent weekly, but this will be kept under review with the Foster Parent in order to respond to any changes or developments. This contact will include discussions about the care being offered by the parent, helping the Foster Parent with recording or using assessment tools, reviewing how the arrangement is going, and giving the Foster Parent/s the opportunity to express any concerns about the impact of the arrangements on them or other members of their household.

PCFS acknowledges that support groups for Parent and Child Foster Parents can be problematic and PCFS will use technology to offer group supervision for Parent and Child Foster Parents in an effort to promote the sharing of good practice as well as the inclusion.

PCFS will also offer mentoring by experienced parent and Child Foster Parents, particularly for new Foster Parents, as well as encouraging Foster Parents to use other informal support networks. However, this will be coordinated so that the foster parent does not find themselves, or the birth parents, receiving conflicting and contradictory advice from different sources; PCFS SSW’s recognise it is important for this to be monitored through supervision. Parent and Child arrangements are by their nature likely to create particular stresses and times of crisis, for this reason PCFS offer access to 24-hour support not only through the placing Local Authorities emergency duty team but also through PCFS's Out of Hours service

All Foster Parents who are offering Parent and Child arrangements will receive all the core training required by all PCFS Foster Parents. They will also be provided with Parent and Child training covering all the areas of a standard P&C placement. The following areas of additional training to meet the individual demands of specific P&C requirements will be available to consider identified support to provide the best possible outcomes for the placement. This could include….

* the day to day reality of fostering a parent and child
* the legal context of parent and child arrangements
* healthy pregnancy, birth preparation and being a birth companion
* safely caring for babies
* child development, paediatric first aid and the care needs of babies including babies who have experienced alcohol and drugs in uteri.
* building positive relationships with parent/s; including empowerment and advocacy
* working with birth parents to promote nurturing parenting
* understanding attachment and how to promote good attachments
* working with parents with a learning disability, mental health problem or who are not neurotypical, or have experienced domestic abuse
* risk assessment and how to manage risk including safer caring
* child protection and safeguarding, including signs of abuse
* undertaking assessments and use of assessment tools
* recording and sharing of records with parents in a positive way
* report writing court skills and support for giving evidence in court
* managing endings when parent/s and child are separated

Training will be available for both the Foster Parents (where applicable), and where appropriate for a single Foster Parent to be accompanied by a member of their support network. Training will be mandatory for both Foster Parents.

**Safer Caring**

Having a good understanding of safer care principles is crucial for all Foster Parents. PCFS believe this is particularly important when another adult, often a woman, is joining the household that includes a male Foster Parent or other male adults. PCFS recognises that there is often an increased risk of an allegation being made if parent and child assessments are not going well. Parents may feel desperate and that they need to give themselves another chance in a different setting. PCFS have a policy that considers and supports fully how Foster Parents manage allegations made against them.

**Finance**

Payment for Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements recognises the focus on parenting support and guidance for arrangements. This also reflects the impact of having another adult living as part of the foster family unit as well as the knowledge, skills and expertise required of the Foster Parents, where a child’s welfare and safety are being considered by the local authority and court.

Financial considerations and arrangements will be discussed in the pre-planning for a placement and this will cover issues dependent on whether the Foster Parent or the birth parent receives the child benefit and who pays for the child’s expenses. Further discussions will be required if parent is a child in care in their own right.

Advice on benefits can easily be accessed on the Direct Gov UK website at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). There may be implications for any benefits entitlement of the Foster Parent/s; there may be issues for the birth parent/s in relation to any housing benefits they claim depending on the length of time the parent is living in the foster home. They might find they lose their entitlement to this; it's therefore important that discussions are held with the relevant agencies prior to any arrangements being made as part of the preplacement planning. If the Foster Parent/s live in social housing an adult parent could be classed as a lodger and they may have to pay council tax again. All these issues need to be further explored prior to any arrangements being made. There is also information available on the HMRC website about how arrangements for a parent under 18 with children who are not a child in care.

**Holiday/Respite**

A break in fostering arrangements is only permitted in the duration of a parent and child arrangements in exceptional circumstances. PCFS recognises that where Foster Parents are providing a time limited assessment, for example a fixed period of up to three months, there is usually no formal respite provision or opportunities for holidays to be taken by Foster Parents. PCFS support Foster Parents to think creatively about how to provide appropriate breaks and encourage Foster Parent/s to develop a pool of support from their network. PCFS do support day-care and/or baby-sitting for Parent and Child arrangements.

**Additional Financial Considerations**

In the majority of Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements the parent will be in receipt of welfare benefits and they are expected to use these benefits to provide for themselves and their child (clothing, nappies, formula/food etc.). This is an essential part of the arrangement, because parents need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their budgeting skills and ability to place their child’s needs above their own. Should a parent not be in receipt of benefits then discussion and agreement needs to be reached at the Placement Arrangements Meeting (at the very latest) about how the Foster Parent will support the parent to finance looking after themselves and their child, and how monies will be spent while a benefit claim is made.

**Savings and Pocket Money**

If the parent and/or the child is a Child in Care the Foster Parent will pay savings in line with the current PCFS policy to both the parent and the child.

**Referrals, Matching and Care Planning**

At the point of referral PCFS will ask for specific information and also a range of basic facts pertaining to both the parent and the child and the wider planning context of the arrangement. PCFS have adopted and developed a parent child referral form that covers this specific information based on good practice guidance from Coram BAAF.

This documentation also includes a risk assessment that primarily focuses on the parent to ensure that they will be able to live in a foster home without jeopardising the health and safety of any other household members. PCFS will request full referral information from the placing authority. PCFS are aware of their duty of care towards their Foster Parents and must ensure that their safety and the safety of their family remains the priority.

PCFS recognises that matching can only be effective when the purpose of the arrangement is clearly identified along with the needs of the parent and the child. Matching undertaken well will set out the needs of the parent and child and identify a Foster Parent who is well placed to meet these. PCFS considers that discussions must identify any issues of language, ethnicity, religion (including opportunities for the child’s religious observance) and culture. It is important for parent/s and Foster Parent/s to communicate effectively with each other - if they do not speak the same language, this may set up a potential barrier from the outset. PCFS will ensure that every effort has been made to take into account the wishes and feelings of the birth parent.

PCFS will provide written information to the parent/s about Parent and Child fostering. PCFS will provide a profile of the Foster Parent/s to the birth parent/s and to the Placing Local Authority. PCFS support setting up introductory meetings as well as placement agreement and planning meetings. PCFS acknowledge that setting up introductory meetings in advanced of a parent and child arrangement can be something that increases the probability of things going well. However, if a face to face meeting is not possible PCFS will support a virtual meeting as an alternative option.

As part of the matching process PCFS requests that all information (i.e. pre-birth assessment, risk assessment, conference minutes) is made available to help ensure good and safe matching and emphasises to placing authorities that failure to do so could result in delay in an arrangement starting, alongside the possibility of poor outcomes for the child and safeguarding considerations not able to be suitably managed.

PCFS understands the importance of how parents are welcomed into the foster home and have developed Welcome Pack’s specific to Parent and Child placements. There is a crib sheet to encourage Foster Parent/s to support birth parent/s to start putting together a memory box for the duration of their stay. Introductions also include day to day practicalities as well as showing the parent/s how to use household appliances i.e. the washing machine and cooker etc; what is expected in terms of keeping medication and talking them through the home fire safety plan. This is incorporated into a Parent Welcome Pack providing a photographic visual guide alongside the written instructions that can be revisited by the parent.

**Placement Planning**

PCFS agrees with research that suggests that time invested in planning prior to a Parent and Child Arrangement can be crucial in maximising the chances of the arrangement working well and achieving the desired outcomes. It's therefore essential that placing local authority social workers and PCFS invest time and effort into getting the planning right; this provides a good foundation for everything that follows.

It's essential at the outset of a placement that parent/s are made aware of PCFS complaints system and how they can address matters that they're unhappy with. Parent/s are clearly the least powerful people in the process for a Parent and Child Arrangement and they need to be aware that there are independent arrangements in place to consider matters if they feel they are not being treated fairly or if individuals are behaving in an unacceptable way. Discussing these matters at the outset gives a clear framework for resolving difficulties and this information should be provided to parent/s verbally and in writing with any other information they are given about the foster home. PCFS have adapted and developed a parent and child placement/arrangement agreement form that collates all the required information and maximises the chance of an effective planning meeting. PCFS expect that the plan is signed by all parties and this then serves as an agreement regarding the commitment of each party. This can then be referred to when reviewing progress or if disagreements arise within the Parent and Child placement. Within the agreement form there are some areas that are particularly important and need detailed consideration.

1.roles and responsibilities

2.childcare and babysitting

3.house rules

4.smoking

5.contact and visitors

6.finance and equipment

Any risks that the parent or associated person or child might pose to the foster family will be included in the placement plan risk assessment, along with the objectives of the arrangement, expected outcomes and the timeframe for assessment. Any such risk assessment will include specific considerations; if the parent is subject to a drug and/or alcohol treatment program; has a learning disability or mental health problems.

For all Parent and Child Arrangements a placement planning meeting will take place before the arrangement starts. If this is not possible the reasons must be recorded and arranged as a priority.

The placement planning meeting will provide clarity as to the expectations of the ……….

Foster Parent: -

* Level of observation, supervision, no intervention, intervention, modelling, any specific focus/tasks that require assistance and attention etc.

The Parent: -

* House rules, supervised/unsupervised care of child, contact with others outside of the foster family, how parental responsibility will be exercised, contact arrangements for other family members.

Other professionals or partner agencies: -

* Contact with other professionals or other agencies relevant to the parent and child arrangements (i.e. Health Visitor, Midwife etc.)

Agreement should be discussed and reached about how progress towards meeting the objectives of the arrangement will be monitored and the plan should the arrangement need to end.

A review of the placement plan should be held within 5 days of the placement starting and at regular intervals as specified in the plan, as well as at the regular child in care reviews. This is the point to revisit roles and responsibilities and clarify any changes.

**Assessing Parents and Good Enough Parenting**

PCFS consider that while Foster Parent/s are a significant contributor to assessments for the most part it is not desirable that they lead this process.

**Foster Parent Record Keeping**

PCFS recognise that good quality Foster Parent records can be incredibly powerful, and impact significantly on what is decided in court.

When an assessment of parenting is being undertaken one crucial aspect of this will be the Foster Parents records/logs/diary that will most likely be used by the assessor in writing their report for court. Sometimes the Foster Parents records will be appended to social work court statements, and Foster Parents will need to be prepared to make statements regarding their records and attend court to give evidence and be cross examined about them if necessary. PCFS consider it is essential that Foster Parents are trained and supported to keep good and detailed written records. They must be accurate and appropriate.

In line with the recognition that Foster Parents are not assessing the parent PCFS will, where possible, direct Foster Parents to only record what they see and what they hear. The advantage of this is that Foster Parents cannot then get drawn into difficult court situations where they are under pressure to justify their opinions or analysis, they can simply repeat what they have seen and heard. PCFS will support Foster Parents if they are required to attend court as they are expected to attend if called. Please remember that this does not mean that the Foster Parents thoughts, feelings and opinions are unimportant, they should be included in supervision sessions or in meetings with the assessing worker.

PCFS logs also provide space for any other comments that the Foster Parent may consider relevant but do not fit under any of the other headings. PCFS Foster Parents are expected to complete logs on a daily basis.

PCFS policies promote an open and transparent approach in relation to record keeping. Good practice will involve Foster Parents sharing their logs with birth parents on a regular basis, allowing the parent to record any disagreements or make any comments in relation to what has been written about them. PCFS daily logs include a section for the birth parents comment on what has been written by the Foster Parent. They are also asked to sign and date to indicate that they have read records, so there can be no suggestion the concerns identified by the Foster Parent have been withheld from the birth parent. The purpose of this is to benefit the Foster Parent as well as the birth parents, to help parents see where they are making progress as well as where they are falling short. This can be helpful in contributing to improvements and consideration whether birth parents can reflect on what is being shared and make changes accordingly. Even where the birth parent is not be able to make the necessary changes it is beneficial to help them understand why their child is being removed, if that is the outcome, and evidences that they have been given every opportunity to address the concerns.

**Planning for Endings**

It's helpful to consider potential endings of the arrangement; this will involve being clear with parent/s about what circumstances might necessitate an arrangement being terminated. This might include a parent refusing to engage in the assessment or failing to adhere to specific contact plans or providing details of the foster home to a partner or another with a history of violence.

If the ending is more positive with the parent being deemed suitable to care for their child in the community then the planning will be different but equally as important. PCFS and PCFS Foster Parent/s will ensure there is an appropriate support structure in place for both the parent and the child.

PCFS will consider a review at the end of each Parent and Child Fostering Arrangement for reflection and learning

What went well in the arrangement?

What was difficult in the arrangement?

What could the Foster Parent/s have done differently?

What could PCFS have done differently?

What can be learned from the experience?

**Closing Thoughts**

Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements have increasingly become the norm. While there is a need for further research and studies of the impact of this type of fostering. What evidence there is suggests that Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements

can offer a very effective way of assessing and supporting parents care for their children.

PCFS provides Foster Parents with good quality specialised support and training that is specific to the task.

**Further Reading**

Parent and Child Fostering (2nd edition 2010) CoramBAAF

Department for Education (2010a) Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, London: DfE

Department for Education (2010b) Statutory Guidance (Volume 4:Fostering Services), London: DfE

Department for Education (2011) The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, London: DfE