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## Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

### AMENDMENT

This chapter was updated in May 2020 to reflect in more detail the foster carer's role and responsibilities with respect to Fostering National Minimum Standards – Notification of Significant Events (see [Section 1, Introduction](#)) and relevant aspects of Schedule 6 The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, (see [Section 2, Planned Supervision Visits](#)).

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### 1. Introduction

Foster carers benefit from professional and supportive relationships with the Fostering Service, which help them to provide high-quality care.

Foster carers are part of the team around the child, which is mutually supportive. They are actively involved in planning for the child, and their views are valued by the Local Authority to positively influence children's progress. They work very effectively together with children's social workers to ensure that placements are appropriate, planned and meet the needs of children. The support provided to foster carers by the Fostering Service is also designed to help them to cope with the additional demands of fostering on their family life.

All approved foster carers will have an allocated, suitably qualified supervising social worker. The allocated supervising social worker is responsible for supervising and supporting carers, ensuring that they have the necessary guidance, support and direction to maintain a quality service, including safe caring practices. This will include an understanding that they must work within the [National Minimum Standards for Fostering](#) and the agency's policies, procedures and guidance. The supervising social worker should provide effective support and challenge through the supervision and review processes to ensure that carers are providing high-quality care.

The supervising social worker must also ensure that the foster carers' training and development needs are identified, and that newly approved carers work towards completing the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers Workbook. They also have the responsibility to ensure foster carers are familiar and made aware of new policies and guidance.

The foster carer(s) should be fully aware of the **Notification of Significant Events** and the need to immediately report to their supervising social worker or Fostering Agency the following:

- The Death of a Child;
- A Serious illness or serious accident of a child placed with them;
- The outbreak at the foster home of any infectious disease (which in the opinion of a general practitioner attending the home is sufficiently serious to be notified);
- An allegation that a child placed with foster parents has committed a serious offence;
- A child placed with them they have concerns about of being sexually exploited;
- The Police calling to the foster carer's home as a result of a serious incident relating to a child placed there;
- A child placed with the foster carer(s) who has gone missing;
- Any serious concerns about the emotional or mental health of a child, such that a mental health assessment would be requested under the Mental Health Act 1983.

See also **Notifications of Significant Events Procedure**.

The child's allocated social worker should be contacted for specific advice or support in relation to the child and his or her their Care Plan and Placement Plan.

## 2. Planned Supervision Visits

Carers will receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children's experiences, needs, plans and feedback. Supervision will be recorded by the supervising social worker and stored on the foster carers records.

A programme of supervision visits should be set up and agreed between the foster carer and the supervising social worker from the time of the foster carer's approval, and endorsed by the supervising social worker's line manager.

Supervision is essentially a supportive and enabling two way process to:

- Ensure the foster carers understand how they contribute to the local authority's services for children;
- Enable foster carers to contribute effectively to the plans for the children for whom they are caring and ensure that plans for children remain in children's best interests;
- Provide appropriate monitoring and feedback on the foster carer's work to ensure **National Standards for Foster Carers** are fully met;
- Complete personal development plans for each carer, which are linked to their training and their annual review;
- Support foster carers by providing advice or making this available from elsewhere as appropriate;
- Give foster carers an opportunity to raise any problems and make sure they are addressed appropriately;

- Acknowledge the challenges and demands that the fostering tasks make on foster families and ensure appropriate support is available;
- Recognise and address any difficulties the foster carer's own children may be experiencing arising from fostering; and
- Assist foster carers to work in an anti discriminatory way that respects and promotes individual differences.

The agenda for each meeting should cover:

- a. Matters arising from the last supervision;
- b. Personal issues, e.g. effect of a placement on the foster carer's own family, changes in the carer's situation and circumstances etc.
- c. Child/ren in placement:
  - a. Their health, cultural, educational, leisure and contact needs – and any support needs;
  - b. Progress and work with respect towards each child's Care Plan;
  - c. Any accidents, injuries and illnesses experienced by each child;
  - d. Any complaints in relation to children placed with them and their outcomes;
  - e. Concerns around behaviour management in relation to children they are caring for Any issues of control, restraint or discipline in relation to children placed with them;
  - f. Any other significant events (see [Section 1, Introduction](#));
  - g. Any medication, medical treatment or first aid administered.
- d. Training/development issues for the foster carers and their family;
- e. Safe caring and health and safety issues;
- f. Foster carer's recording which is to be reviewed by the supervising social worker who should sign the foster carers' diary.

The supervision visits should be recorded on a pro forma Foster Carer Supervision Record, signed by the foster carer and the supervising social worker, and should include:

- Any concerns expressed;
- Any support needs expressed by the foster carers and how they will be met;
- Any financial issues.

A record of all meetings should be kept on the foster carer's file and one copy given to the foster carers.

The supervision records will inform the foster carer's review - see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#).

### 3. Frequency of Supervision

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Supervision meetings will take place at least once every twelve weeks.

Additional visits may be made for the purposes of support (to the foster carer or any member of the foster family) with telephone contact at least every four weeks.

### 4. Unannounced Visits

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There should also be unannounced visits at least once a year. The main purpose of the unannounced visit will be to look at the home environment that a child is living in.

The unannounced visits will be undertaken by the foster carer's supervising social worker who will need to check:

- i. Who is in the home;
- ii. Who is looking after the child;
- iii. If the carer is not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the child.

If the foster carers are not at home, the supervising social worker should leave a note for the foster carers to say that they have visited.

If the foster carers are not at home but the child is present and being looked after by someone else, the social worker should check the identity of that person but should not continue with the visit.

Unannounced visits should be recorded.

There should not ordinarily be a regular programme of unannounced visits without particular reason - for example if a foster carer is being closely monitored. In such an event the reason for such will be explained to the foster carer.

Refusal to allow access to the home on an unannounced visit may lead to a review of Foster Carer approval.

## 5. Support Provided by the Supervising Social Worker

Supervising social workers should ensure the following tasks are done:

1. Ensure that all new carers complete the induction programme and that their support, development and training needs are assessed and met so that they meet the standards and achieve the Induction Standards for the Children's Workforce certificate of completion by their first annual review, or soon after if extra support is required;
2. Give Foster Carers' Handbook to new carer;
3. Give Foster Carer Agreement to the carer: 2 copies to be signed and one returned and placed on the carer's file;
4. Support carers with any specialist issues for disabled children for e.g. support in completing applications for Carer's Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, etc.

### Pre-Placement

5. Complete risk assessments surrounding bedroom sharing (each child over 3 has their own bedroom or, where this is not possible, the sharing of the bedroom has been agreed by the placing authority), mixing with other children in home, etc. Discuss and check equipment (especially in the child's bedroom) and ensure it is appropriate to the age of the child in placement;
6. Take part in discussions about potential placements;
7. Take part in planning meetings regarding placements;
8. Ensure that the child's social worker gives the foster family full information about children about to be placed, including any abuse or neglect and the reason for the placement, the child's educational, medical, religious, racial, linguistic and cultural needs. In cases of emergency placement full information may not be available at the time that the child is placed.

9. Discuss issues relevant to contact with birth parents and other family members;

10. Discuss how child's health needs are promoted and how children should be encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle;
11. Assist carers in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education;
12. Discuss appropriate training to provide appropriate care when caring for children with complex health needs;
13. Assist carer with training needs for appropriate safer care practice, including skills to care for children who have been abused. For foster carers who offer placements to disabled children, this includes training specifically on issues affecting disabled children;
14. Discuss financial issues with the carer: allowances, pocket money, leisure activities, toiletries and travelling etc. and the importance of complying with the terms of the Council's insurance policy for carers;
15. Enquire about holiday plans the carers have made, and if the child is able to join them? If not the carer must inform the child's social worker so alternative arrangements can be made;
16. Exchange contact numbers with all relevant members of the family, including out of hours support;
17. That arrangements are made for the provision of specialist equipment for disabled children;
18. Set date of first visit after the placement;
19. Let the social worker for a child already in placement know when another child is placed;
20. Provide carers with training and written policy on behaviour management.

## During Placement

21. Where necessary, check and follow up on all issues raised during the placement. Discuss any areas of concern with foster carers and ensure appropriate support/advice is addressed and in place at the time rather than waiting for reviews;
22. Provide foster carers with breaks from caring as appropriate, which must meet the needs of placed children;
23. Take part in any Strategy Meetings and Section 47 Enquiry relating to the foster family. Be involved in interviews/support as agreed;
24. Ensure the supervising social worker and the foster carers receive invitations to child's Looked After Reviews and Child Protection Conferences, and attend when appropriate;
25. Prepare for and attend Foster Carer Review Meetings (See [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#));
26. Ensure training programme is updated and accessed by carers and their family and children;
27. Visit regularly in accordance with the foster carer's needs, the child's Care Plan and as required, (See also [Section 3, Frequency of Supervision](#) and [Section 4, Unannounced Visits](#));
28. Review the Safer Caring Plan and any changes in household circumstances;
29. Assess and review any health and safety issues within the fostering household including the addition of any new pets and the environment in which they are kept;
30. Make unannounced visits as required;
31. Update Disclosure and Barring Service checks on members of the family every 2 years, including those reaching 18 years of age, and other persons who come to live at the home, who are over 18 years;

32. Whilst there is no statutory time interval, as good practice medical information should also be updated at least every 2 years by writing to the foster carer's GP. In the event of any serious concerns about the foster carers health, a review of the foster carers approval should be carried out immediately;
33. Record contact with carers;
34. Provide reports for Panel as required under the relevant procedures;
35. Where appropriate contribute to Court Reports as agreed with child's social worker;
36. Discuss how the carers can support young people into adulthood.

### At End of Placement

37. Support the family as much as possible in what can be a very difficult time;
38. Discuss fully with the carer and their family all the issues that have led to any unplanned end of a placement and identify any learning/training opportunities;
39. Assist the foster carer to complete their end of placement report if required;
40. Attend Placement Consolidation/Disruption Meetings as required.

## 6. Tasks of Social Worker if Allegations are made Against the Carer

For the detailed procedure, see [Allegations Against Foster Carers Procedure](#)

Where allegations regarding childcare or child protection are made, the supervising social worker should:

1. Support the family;
2. If agreed at the strategy meeting, discuss with the carer and their family, the issues that have led to the allegation.
3. Make the carers aware of the process and of their rights during any investigation;
4. Make the carer's aware of their own possible conflict of interests and inform them of where they can seek alternative support and advice from the Fostering Network or other independent sources.

### Further Information

[Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England](#)

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