



South Gloucestershire
Department for Children, Adults and Health
FOSTER CARE AGREEMENT

The Foster Carer Agreement is a requirement under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, 2011. It describes the working partnership between foster carers and the Local Authority with the primary concern of ensuring the welfare of children placed.

This agreement is made between South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health and:-

Name:

Date:

Name:

Date:

South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health agrees that:

All staff should treat foster carers, their family and home with respect and foster carers should also do the same in working with the Team Around the Child.

Before and/or during the placement of a child / young person, the Department will make available to the foster carer any information about the child / young person which is relevant to their care and to the tasks of looking after them.

Approval and review of foster carers:

- 1 In line with National Minimum Standards for Foster Care, approval of foster carers is reviewed at least once a year. The first review and any proposed change in registration will be considered by the Fostering Panel.
- 2 There is an expectation that foster carers attend Fostering Panel, unless in exceptional circumstances that should be discussed with your supervising social worker.
- 3 If there are any significant events such as changes in circumstances, proposed change in registration or if an allegation or complaint has been made against the carers, then a special review will be required.
- 4 In the rare event of the Local Authority deciding to recommend termination of approval, a report from the social worker will be presented to the Fostering Panel to consider, the foster carer may also wish to submit a written response to the report.

Numbers of children approved for:

- 1 The number of children foster carers will be approved for will depend on a range of factors.
- 2 No foster carer can be approved to take more than 3 foster children although there is an exception for sibling groups. Any exemption can only be granted in exceptional circumstances with the approval of a senior manager.

Procedure for placing children with foster carers:

1. Whilst a placement is being sought the Placement Information Record should be completed. The child's social worker has responsibility for this task.
2. An assessment of arrangements for the child's contact with their birth parent/s, extended family and friends should also be considered at this time so that such information is available to the subsequent placement agreement meeting.

3. The foster carers, birth family and child must have a copy of the Placement Information Record at the point the placement begins. The birth parent/s should sign the consent forms for medical treatment and the Health Assessment.

4. A placement agreement meeting can take place as soon as a placement has been identified. A meeting that takes place before the child moves into the placement assists purposeful planning and the anticipation of potential problems and difficulties which may be resolved before the child arrives.

5. If it has not been possible to convene a meeting before the start of the placement one should be held within 72 hours of the placement starting. A meeting held at this point provides an early opportunity to check for any problems so that those involved are fully informed, understand the purpose of the care episode and all the necessary consents have been obtained.

6. The placement agreement meeting should be chaired by the team manager, practice manager or senior practitioner of the case holding team, the 'planning leader'.

7. The meeting would normally take place at the carer's home or residential unit unless not appropriate.

8. The meeting introduces and identifies the 'the team around the child'. Invitees should include:

- The child / young person
- The carer/s
- Birth parent/s (and supporter if required)
- The child's social worker
- Family Placement Team social worker

It may also be appropriate to invite representation from the child's school, Health etc., dependent on circumstances.

9. The meeting is crucial in establishing relationships and making the overall planning process an inclusive one. Research has identified that a common cause of placement instability is poor or insensitive communication. The placement agreement meeting must ensure that mechanisms are in place to share information.

10. The agenda for a placement agreement meeting focuses on the full completion of the Consent to Placement & Medical Treatment Form. The Chair has responsibility for ensuring that the form is completed at the meeting and signed.

11. The Consent to Placement & Medical Treatment Form is the key document for identifying tasks and responsibilities for the team around the child. It is important that all circumstances are covered. It may be appropriate to identify additional headings under which tasks and responsibilities can be set out. These can be incorporated in the current lay out of the form or attached as additional papers. The discussion should include clarity on delegated authority given to foster carers.

12. The meeting should ensure that the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process is underway at this time and a health assessment has been undertaken or booked.

13. Any health matters should also be noted in the relevant section and consideration of services available through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services should be noted here.

14. The Placement Information Form and Consent to Placement & Medical Treatment Form must consider contingencies in each area so that all involved in the child's care know what should happen if an aspect of the plan (for example education or contact) does not progress as expected.

15. The placement agreement must ensure that the carer has been provided with full information about the foster child and his or her family to enable the carer to protect the foster child, their own children, other foster children and themselves. It should detail any delegated authority granted to the foster carers, which should also be reviewed as part of each Looked After Child review.

16. The meeting should also ensure that information is available to the child on why they are being looked after and the current timescale of care planning. Such information needs to be made available to the child at a level and format appropriate to their age and level of development. The child's social worker has responsibility for ensuring that such information is made available to the child.

17. It is crucial to the satisfactory outcome of a placement agreement meeting that all those involved in the care and development of the child are clear about their own tasks and responsibilities, the tasks and responsibilities of others, how information and communication will be passed between members of the

team around the child and what the contingency arrangements are. Discussion around delegated authority should inform this.

18. The final copy of the Consent to Placement & Medical Treatment Form and Placement Information Record must be signed by all present and a copy circulated within 72 hours. Where a typed copy will not be available in this timescale a photocopy of the original should be provided to the foster carer, the child and the birth family.

Procedures for finance and insurance:

- 1 A statement of the fostering allowances paid by the local authority to its carers is supplied to all foster carers and will be reviewed annually.
- 2 Where there is a claim for damage caused by the child or young person in placement, the foster carer will need to claim from their own household insurance.
- 3 The South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health will provide insurance cover as set out in the Foster Carers' Handbook where the carer is not covered by their own insurance policy.
- 4 All claims will be processed as soon as possible.

Supervision / Support

- 1 The foster carer/s will receive advice, support and supervision from a named social worker attached to the Family Placement Team who will establish regular contact with the carer/s and monitor the placement/s made. The minimum frequency of contact and supervision are set out in the Supervision Agreement which all carers will have signed.
- 2 The Family Placement Team social worker will discuss training needs with the foster carer/s. The designated training officer in the Family Placement Team will provide regular ongoing opportunities for training and development. Training needs will be regularly discussed during supervision visits.
- 3 All approved foster carers are provided with membership of Fostering Network by the South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health. Fostering Network also provides information on appropriate training and legal advice for members.
- 4 Foster carers will be advised about access to other professional support services, e.g. health and CAMHS.
- 5 All foster carers should also be aware of the Foster Carers' Charter which can

be viewed on the fostering section of the Council's website and refers to the importance of working in a positive way with other foster carers and the Team Around the Child in order to promote a positive working culture

Complaints:

Foster carers can access a copy of the Complaints Procedure for South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health on the website. This covers the procedure for any complaints on behalf of the child / young person or complaints from foster carers.

The Foster Carer agrees to:

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- 1 Care for any child placed with them as if the child was a member of their own family and to promote that child's welfare having regard to long and short term plans for the child.
- 2 Inform their fostering social worker of:
 - any intended change of address
 - any change in the composition of the household
 - Any other event affecting carers' capacity to care for any child/young person placed such as separation/divorce, significant illness.
 - any criminal charges or convictions involving members of the household or extended family.
 - any application made by the foster carers or any member of their household to adopt a child
 - any decision to register as a childminder or to provide day care for children.
- 3 Ensure that confidential information about the child / young person, her or his family, or any other person will be kept confidential and not disclosed to any person without permission of South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health. Keep confidential written information locked away and return it to the Department for safe disposal when the placement ends.
- 4 Co-operate as reasonably required with OFSTED Inspections and to allow a person authorised by OFSTED to interview him/her and visit his/her home at any reasonable time.
- 5 Not to foster a child / young person from within or another local authority without the prior consultation and agreement of the South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health as their approving authority.
- 6 Any respite arrangements need to be made and agreed through the Family Placement Duty Officer.
- 7 Requests for respite should be made two months in advance, unless in

- exceptional circumstances.
- 8 Any member of the household who reaches the age of 18 must give permission for police (Disclosure and Barring Service) and any other statutory checks required by the Department.
 - 9 Any person over the age of 18 who joins the household must also consent to checks required by the police and this Department.

Training and Development

- Attend supervision groups and training sessions arranged for them. Core Skills training and completion of Training Support and Development Standards (TSD) are a requirement for all foster carers.
- Take responsibility for identifying development/training needs.
- Accept regular supervision from their Family Placement Team social worker.
- If your Family Placement Team social worker is absent for any reason, any issues should be discussed with the Duty social worker.
- Complete the required number of training courses as set out in the fostering handbook.

Media Activity and Confidentiality

Foster carers will not talk to the media about children placed with them either currently or in the past, about their work as a foster carer or any aspect of the Foster Care Service without prior approval from the Service Manager. Where foster carers wish to participate in media activity not related to their role as a foster carer they will require prior approval from the Service Manager so that the potential impact of related publicity upon any child placed with them can be considered.

Social Media Activity (as per policy on Social Networking Information for Children's Social Care Staff, Foster Carers and Prospective Adopters)

Carers will model good use of social networking sites themselves

It is important to be aware of issues of confidentiality on social networking sites. Information about young people in your care must not be posted.

It is important to be aware that 'bad mouthing' colleagues or posting details about certain lifestyle choices can lead to disciplinary action, resulting in your de-registration.

Children and young people have a right to privacy; no one should publish/share information about a child or young people without first checking with those who have parental responsibility. It would not be appropriate for foster carers to post/share any information about the children in their care, especially photos.

Use of Security Devices

The use of security cameras or listening/video devices inside the foster home is not permitted unless specifically agreed by a Service Manager when there may be exceptional circumstances concerning the welfare and safety of children.

Use of baby monitors are acceptable for children up to the age of 2.

Children/Young People missing or removed from the foster carer's home:

- If the foster carer believes there is a risk of significant harm if a child or young person is removed then they should notify the police and the Department for Children, Adults and Health immediately.
- If a child/young person goes missing or there is an unplanned removal from placement, foster carers must contact the Local Authority immediately or if during non-office hours, the foster carers must contact the Emergency Duty Team on tel. 01454 615165

Ending Placements:

- 1 Placements must not be terminated without prior discussion with the Department and a Placement Stability Meeting being held.
- 2 If difficulties arise in a placement which cannot be resolved, an additional Looked After Child Review meeting will be convened. If it is agreed that the child should move from the placement, this would normally take place in a planned manner with a minimum of 28 days notice.
- 3 Foster carers should allow any child / young person placed with them to be removed by the Department.

Holidays/absences from the fostering placement

1. Carers will not take children/young people away either in this country or abroad without the prior agreement of the Department.
2. Inform the Child's Social Worker if the child/young person is away from the foster carer's address for any period over 24 hours.

Fostering Tasks: foster carers agree to -

- 1 Safeguard and promote the welfare of any child/young person placed having regard to South Gloucestershire Department's Care Plans.
- 2 Not use corporal punishment on any child/young person placed; including

- slapping, pinching, shaking or any other rough handling. The child/young person should not be intentionally deprived of access to food and drink, denied sleep, dressed in inappropriate clothing, be locked in a room, deprived of liberty or threatened with denying or restricting contact visits to their family relatives as a form of punishment.
- 3 Care for the child / young person should be no less favourable than for other members of the family.
 - 4 Ensure that contact is promoted for children/young people with relatives and friends in accordance with the child's care plan.
 - 5 Provide the child/young person with a good standard of clothing/toys/books as covered by the age-related fostering allowance and provide the child / young person with the set amount of pocket money.
 - 6 Attend reviews, case conferences and planning meetings concerning the children/young person placed and to maintain regular and appropriate contact with the schools of children placed and any other agencies involved (such as hospitals, clinics, psychological and psychiatric services etc).
 - 7 Notify the Department of any involvement of young people with the police.
 - 8 Notify the Department immediately of any illness or accident that involves the child / young person.
 - 9 Notify the Department of any instances of restraint.
 - 10 Arrange for any child/young person placed to receive appropriate medical attention.
 - 11 Promote the child/young person's health by ensuring that they regularly receive dental check ups, sight tests and any hearing tests or immunisations they require. Teach children and young people to look after their bodies and make sure they have access to necessary information.
 - 12 Protect children from the effects of passive smoking. No carer should smoke in front of children and children should be provided with a smoke-free environment as far as is possible.
 - 13 Ensure that all children/young people placed are encouraged to practise their religion and be proud of their culture and racial origins.
 - 14 To respect the race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, disability and gender of the child/young person placed and his/her family.
 - 15 Allow social workers to meet with the children / young people placed at all reasonable times.
 - 16 Foster carers should know the whereabouts of any child/young person placed at all times.
 - 17 Ensure that a child or young person placed is looked after by a responsible adult in the carer's absence.

We have read, understand and accept the terms of the Foster Care Agreement and arrangements.

Signed by foster carer/s

_____ **Date** _____

_____ **Date** _____

Signed on behalf of South Gloucestershire Department for Children, Adults and Health

Family Placement Team Social Worker _____

Date: _____

Team Manager/Senior Social Worker _____

Date: _____