

**Swindon Borough Council Fostering Service
Policy and Procedure for Parent and Child Foster Placements**

January 2021

1. Introduction

Swindon Borough Council's Parent and Child Foster Placements Policy has been designed and written to ensure that action taken by Swindon Children's Services is in line with legislation, national policy and guidance. It aims to ensure that all foster carers, supervising social workers, parents and children's social workers have the same understanding about the placement tasks they are required to undertake, and the legal basis for doing so.

This policy should be implemented following:

- A pre-birth assessment; or
- A statutory assessment which recommends a parent and child placement; or
- At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings.

In exceptional circumstances, where the required assessments have not been completed, a clear plan, with timescales, must be agreed at the Pre-Placement Meeting for the completion of the assessment.

Parent and child foster care is an exceptional arrangement for very young babies and their parents.

2. Legal Context

There are three scenarios that apply to parent and child fostering, with different implications depending on the 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 a parent under the age of 18 (who is looked after), and their child (who is not looked after) live together in a foster placement. The requirements of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations and 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 of the fostering household. In this situation the parent, if under 18, will have been assessed but not identified as a child in need in their own right.

3. Criteria for Parent and Child Assessment Placement Foster Carers

These criteria are in addition to the eligibility criteria within the fostering policy, and apply specifically to Parent and Child placements.

- Carers must be able to demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and values outlined in the Fostering Coram BAAF assessment and that they can adequately meet all Parent and Child fostering requirements (See Appendix 1 – CoramBAAF Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F) England: Parent and Child Fostering Assessment Report) ;
- There are additional competencies specific to Parent and Child fostering, which approved foster carers will need to evidence that they can meet;
- Carers need to have sufficient physical space to accommodate a parent with their child on a residential or non-residential (subject to approval) basis;
- Carers need to have the availability to undertake intense pieces of assessment work. Assessments are a constant process with the child and their parent being in the foster home for the majority of the time. This will

have implications for all members of the fostering household, and also for extended family members;

- For Parent and Child carers, their home is their workplace and they need to be available to focus on the fostering task. It would not generally be appropriate to approve carers for this type of fostering who have young dependent children (primary school aged) and / or children with a higher level of need. That stated, in exceptional circumstances, where carers have specific significant support systems in place to ensure their availability as full-time Parent and Child carers, then it may be appropriate to consider approval for parent and child placements, even if there are other young / dependent children in the home. This would be subject to satisfactory assessment and ongoing review;
- Foster Carers' approval may include a variety of placement types in addition to parent and child, but they will only offer one placement type at any given time;
- Because of the unique nature of Parent and Child fostering, it is not generally appropriate for carers to simultaneously undertake alternative fostering tasks. However, in some circumstances it may be appropriate to undertake certain tasks such as peer support.

3.1 Training

Parent and child carers have specific approval for this placement type. There are also additional training needs for these carers. These can be addressed through assessment, formal training, support groups and wider networks as identified in the carer's Personal Development Plan. As with all carers, PDP's are reviewed on an annual basis.

Some of the topics covered by the additional training for parent and child foster carers will include: what is parent and child fostering; understanding, promoting and assessing attachment; tools of assessment; parenting skills; safeguarding; recording and report writing; and understanding court and giving evidence.

Foster carers undertaking Parent and Child Placements will be expected to complete the following specific training courses:

- Parent and Child Fostering Placements Training
- Domestic Abuse Awareness (online)
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness (online)
- Learning Disability Awareness (online)
- Mental Health Awareness (online)
- The Adolescent Brain and Promoting Healthy Infant Attachment (Family Nurse Partnership training)
- Motivational Interviewing (Family Nurse Partnership training)

Additional training courses available / courses under development include:

- Healthy Infant Care
- The Public Law Outline – Understanding Court Processes and Recording Requirements in Parent and Child Placements
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Supporting Contact in Parent and Child placements

4. Approval for Parent and Child Assessment Placements

If, following a pre-birth/statutory assessment, it is identified that a Parent and Child placement is required this request should be presented at the Care Panel to seek approval.

4.1 Criteria for Acceptance of Referrals for Placement

Social Workers will be required to submit the initial placement request by completion of a CoramBAAF Parent and Child Referral Form. It is essential that a Parent and Child Fostering Placement – Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan is also completed. See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks must be commenced and PNC checks completed in respect of all parents aged 18+ years, before a placement can be made.

Other additional assessments previously undertaken should be sent with the referral, alongside an up-to-date chronology.

It is essential that any safeguarding issues are highlighted within the referral (e.g. non-accidental injuries, mental health issues, and drug and alcohol misuse) and an analysis of the possible impact on a fostering family is included. This is needed in order to assist with matching.

4.2 Pre-Placement Planning Guidance

The Pre-Placement Meeting and contract (see Appendix 4 - CoramBAAF Parent and Child Fostering Placement / Arrangement Agreement) are essential tasks to be completed prior to any placement. Failure to do so could result in delay in making a placement, or a poor placement outcome. A pre-birth assessment is expected in all cases, except where the pregnancy has been concealed or only identified at a later stage. In these cases, where a placement is required in an emergency, a Child and Family Single Assessment should be completed within 35 days of the initial referral having been received.

The assessment element of the placement will normally be agreed for a period of 12 weeks. A review at 6 weeks is a requirement of all placements as this will prevent drift and enhance decision-making. A senior manager may agree an extension to the placement timescale, if there is an identified need for continued parenting work, support, transitional plans or further assessment.

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.

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 Child Looked After, realistic timescales for independent living should form part of the assessment and planning.

However, parent and child foster placements should not be treated as the only means of assessment or training in parenting skills. The foster carer will be *informing* the assessment; the parenting assessment itself is the responsibility of the child's social worker.

For a Parent and Child placement to successfully meet its objectives there must be multi-agency working and assessment. The child's social workers 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 and midwife). Additional support via the Family Nurse Partnership, Baby Steps and New Beginnings should also be considered.

Where the child is in placement and subject to either an ICO 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 at the pre-placement meeting.

At the Pre-Placement Meeting, the social worker must provide a clear statement as to the objectives of the placement and the timescale for assessment. Those involved in the meeting must agree how progress towards meeting the objectives will be tracked, and how success will be measured. This must be made clear to the parent.

Following the ending of a placement a foster carer *may* agree (under new contract) to provide further support via outreach support within the parent's home for up to 2 weeks. This arrangement will only be put in place following a Placement Planning Meeting and the completion and signing of the placement contract.

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, then by the direction of the Court, or with the agreement of the parent, the child should be moved to a different placement. This may also involve a change of placement for the parent if the placement is designated only as a parent and child placement.

5. Role of the Foster Carer

The foster carer(s) will be expected to offer guidance and assistance to the parent in managing the care tasks for the baby. This may include direct instruction or modelling, it may include responding to questions, or it may include practical support such as accompanying the parent to 'parent and baby' groups, health-visiting clinic, shopping etc. The placement should provide a safe and friendly environment to provide supervision and support to the parent, to improve and consolidate parenting skills.

The foster carer will be expected to show the parent how any technical appliances work so that they are able to use cooking and cleaning facilities appropriately. If the placement progresses positively it must be expected that the parent demonstrate less reliance on the carers support.

The foster carer should promote and support the key attachment between parent and child.

The foster carer will be expected to keep one daily record noting observations of the parent's ability to respond to their baby's needs, manage the routine, and manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform any parenting programme or assessment that has been agreed. The foster carer will be expected to be open and honest about the parent's strengths and difficulties when recording their observations and the parent must be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations (see Appendix 5: Parent and Child Fostering Placement – Foster Carer Daily Record Sheet).

The Foster carer and their Supervising Social Worker will complete a safer care policy, based on discussions held within the placement planning meeting, and will provide a copy of the safer care policy in relation to the individual parent and child placement. The Foster carer will inform the parent of any household rules and routines, and of the safer caring policy.

The 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.

Foster carers should intervene if the level of risk to the child from a parent would be detrimental to their welfare.

The Foster carer will always seek medical advice or treatment for any fall or injury that a child has sustained. A report of any injury should be made to the child's social worker and supervising social worker as soon as possible. Were this to occur out of hours, the Emergency Duty Service would need to be notified.

The 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.

The Foster carer will attend Pre-Placement Meeting, Reviews, Core Group Meetings, Planning Meetings, Child Protection Conferences and any other meetings required.

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 2 days before the placement commences. If a placement is made on an emergency basis, the foster carer should expect to receive relevant information within 5 days.

The Foster carer will liaise with child's social worker, health visitor and supervising social worker and any other professionals involved.

Should the placement be terminated because of a decision made by Swindon Borough Council relating to a serious breach of the contract, such as, that the well-being of the child is compromised or because the parent has left the placement without agreement; the expectation will be that the child will be moved to a child-only placement.

Although the progress of the placement will be reviewed according to the schedule set out in the contract, the child will also be subject to the Children Looked after Review mechanism according to the statutory schedule, as will the parent if also looked after. The foster carer will remain subject to the foster care review mechanism.

It is not appropriate for a foster carer to take fostering leave during a parent and child placement, and no respite will be granted until after the first 10 weeks, unless this is due to an emergency or has been pre-arranged.

6. Responsibility of the Parent(s)

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 supervision is no longer necessary).

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.

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.

Parent(s) will be expected to shop, budget and cook for self and child and attend to all clothes washing and ironing. One of the placement aims will be for the parent to achieve greater independence and skill in these areas.

Parent(s) will keep their room tidy and leave the kitchen, bathroom and any other communal areas in a tidy, clean condition after use.

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.

Parent(s) will contribute to the wellbeing of everyone in the foster carers' home and in public by demonstrating non-aggressive, non-threatening behaviours.

If agreed in the contract the foster carer will offer babysitting one evening per week; parent will provide 24 hours' notice for the request.

Foster carer may make random room checks to ensure safety of parent and child and therefore all bedroom doors must be kept unlocked.

The foster carer will write accurate daily record sheets, which will be shared daily with parent(s) and signed by both parent(s) and carer.

The foster carer will complete and share the safe caring plan with the parent.

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.

If there are other children in the household, the parent in placement must not provide any practical or supervisory care.

The parent should not keep any alcohol in the carer's home.

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 supervised by a treatment programme for drug or alcohol misuse.

Parent should inform the foster carer and child's social worker of any appointments, and check if childcare cover is required.

Parent's circumstances and history is strictly confidential to the named foster carers and not their families or friends. Parents can feel reassured that no discussions will take place between family members and friends.

Parents over the age of 18 will be subject to Disclosure and Barring Service Checks and Police National Computer Checks, and the results will be fed into the pre-placement risk assessment.

7. Role of the Supervising Social Worker (SSW)

All Parent and Child foster carers must be fully supported by a designated and experienced supervising social worker who will offer the level of support and supervision as agreed in the **Parent and Child Fostering Placement/ Arrangement Agreement**. Any known or potential risks to foster carers 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.

SSW to 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 SSW should inform the child's social worker who will, in discussion with manager, make a decision if the placement goes ahead or is delayed.

SSW will be responsible for monitoring/supporting/supervising/ inspecting the management of the placement.

SSW will visit at a minimum of the first week of placement and three weekly thereafter to provide supervision and support as well as weekly phone contacts. SSW will also undertake unannounced visits.

SSW will read and sign off all daily record sheets and report any issues as appropriate. SSW will discuss with the carer the recorded observation to ensure objectivity remains.

SSW to liaise with the child's social worker to provide updates on the placement.

SSW will inform foster carers if they have any annual leave arranged, lasting for one week or more.

SSW will check with foster carers that they have researched/accessed groups or courses available (if appropriate) for the parent and baby in the local area.

8. Role of the Child's Social Worker

It is important that if a parent is being supported in their own right i.e. as a child in care or care leaver then they should be allocated a different worker from their child's social worker. This will ensure that both are supported with their individual needs.

The child's social worker must visit the placement every 2 weeks and make weekly phone/email contact, in addition to the SSW contact with the carer. During these visits, social workers should discuss individually and together with parent and carer,

how the placement is going in relation to the placement agreement, and provide opportunity to share concerns/worries.

Child's social worker should undertake a room check.

Child's social worker must arrange and chair regular placement reviews following the placement planning meeting. Placement reviews should be structured around the original placement plan, and the reviewing process should highlight placement progress.

Placement reviews should be arranged at 2 weeks, 4 weeks (combined with first Child Looked after Review), 7 weeks and 10 weeks. Every review should consider placement exit and future plans for family.

Child's social worker should check out any arranged appointments and childcare cover that needs to be approved by the carers.

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.

Should a dispute arise within the placement, SSW and child's social worker will initially undertake joint visits. If necessary, the child's social worker will then arrange a follow up meeting to include parent, SSW and carer and locality team manager.

Child's social worker will liaise with housing benefits and senior management if the placement continues past 13 weeks. At this point, if the parent is in receipt of Housing Benefit then their entitlement will cease, unless they return to their property and sleep overnight once a week. The alternative is for the Local Authority to pay the rent to secure the tenancy.

To ensure prompt payment to the carers, Children's Placements Team will inform Fostering Finance of the placement start date, confirm the status of the parent, and if the child is subject to Care Proceedings. If the parent is not CLA then the need for parent lodgings should be discussed.

The child's social worker must ensure that the carer has all relevant information at the latest by the date of the pre-Placement Planning Meeting. If the placement is made in an emergency basis, placement information must be supplied within 5 days.

Child's social worker should provide parent(s) with complaints procedures leaflets.

9. Finance

For financial arrangements, please see Foster Carers' Finance Handbook.

9.1 Parent Benefit Claims/Guidance and Entitlements

Parents will be expected to apply for any benefits to which they are entitled. Information can be obtained from the **direct.gov website**; what an individual is entitled to will depend on their circumstances.

10. Supporting Documentation

This contains all forms and guidance to support this procedure.

Appendices:

**Appendix 1 – CoramBAAF Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F) England:
Parent and Child Fostering Assessment Report**

Appendix 2: CoramBAAF Parent and Child Referral Form

**Appendix 3: Parent and Child Fostering Placement – Risk Assessment and Risk
Management Plan**

**Appendix 4: CoramBAAF Parent and Child Fostering Placement/ Arrangement
Agreement**

**Appendix 5: Parent and Child Fostering Placement – Foster Carer Daily Record
Sheet**