

Wirral Fostering Service

Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

IT TAKES A BIG **HEART** TO FOSTER



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1. Introduction

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.

However, it is the Social Worker of the child or children in the foster placement who holds responsibility for specific advice or support in relation to the child and his or her care plan and placement plan.

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.

2. Planned Supervision Visits

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 Team Manager. In the case of new placements, visits will be weekly for the first six weeks, and then six weekly after this, unless it is determined more regular support is required.

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;
- Provide appropriate monitoring and feedback on the Foster Carers' work to ensure the [Training, Support and Development 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 Carers' own children may be experiencing arising from fostering;
- Assist Foster Carers to work in an anti-discriminatory way that respects and promotes individual differences.
- Assist Foster Carers to create their Personal Development and Training Plan.

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;

- c. Child/ren in placement – their health, cultural, educational, leisure and contact needs – and any support needs;
- d. Training/development issues for the Foster Carers and 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 Carer’s diary.

The supervision visits should be recorded on a Foster Carer Supervision Record, and a copy of this proforma should be provided to the Foster Carer for their own records and should include:

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

The supervision records will inform the Foster Carer’s Review – see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#).

3. Frequency of Supervision

Frequency of supervision meetings will be agreed between the Foster Carer and the Supervising Social Worker and as appears necessary in the interest of the children placed with them.

The frequency of the meetings for Short Break Foster Carers should be proportionate to the amount of care provided.

4. Unannounced Visits

There should also be unannounced visits at least twice 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:

- a. Who is in the home;
- b. Who is looking after the child;
- c. 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 but the child is present and being looked after by someone else, the Supervising 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.

5. Support Provided by the Supervising Social Worker

Supervising Social Workers should ensure the following tasks are done:

Post Approval

- Ensure that all new carers complete the [Foster Carer Training, Support and Development Standards](#) by their first annual review;
- Give Foster Carer's Handbook to new carer;
- Give Foster Carer Agreement to the carer: 2 copies to be signed and one returned and placed on the carer's file;
- Support carers with any specialist issues for disabled children for e.g. support in completing applications for Carer's Allowance, Disabled Living Allowance etc.

Pre-Placement

- Complete risk assessments surrounding bedroom sharing (each child should have 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 the 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;
- Take part in discussions about potential placements;
- Take part in planning meetings regarding placements;
- Ensure that the Child's Social Worker gives the foster family full information about children about to be placed, including a history of abuse or suspected abuse and the reason for the placement, the child's educational, medical, religious, racial, linguistic and cultural needs;
- Discuss issues relevant to contact with birth parents and other family members;
- Discuss how child's health needs are promoted and how children should be encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle;
- Assist carers in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education;
- Discuss appropriate training to provide appropriate care when caring for children with complex health needs;
- Assist carer with training needs for appropriate safe 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;
- Discuss financial issues with the care: 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;
- 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;
- Exchange contact numbers with all relevant members of the family, including out of hours support;
- That arrangements are made for the provision of specialist equipment for disabled children;
- Set date of first visit after the placement;
- Let the Social Worker for a child already in placement know when another child is placed;
- Provide carers with training and written policy on behaviour management through the use of a training plan.

During Placement:

- 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;
- Provide Foster Carers with breaks from caring as appropriate, which must meet the needs of placed children;
- Take part in any strategy meetings and Section 47 enquiries relating to the foster family. Be involved in interviews/support as agreed;
- 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;
- Prepare for and attend Foster Carer Review Meetings (see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#));
- Ensure training programme is updated and accessed by carers and carers' family and children;
- 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](#));
- Review the Safer Caring Plan and any changes in household circumstances;
- 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;
- Make unannounced visits as required;
- Update Disclosure and Barring Services checks on members of the family every three years, including those reaching eighteen years of age, and other persons who come to live at the home, who are eighteen plus;
- Update medicals on the carers every three years or as necessary;
- Record contact with carers;
- Provide reports for Panel as required under the relevant procedures;
- Where appropriate contribute to Court Reports as agreed with child's Social Worker;
- Discuss how the carers can support young people into adulthood;
- Should attend all child looked after reviews with the Foster Carer – who will provide a report to the meeting regarding the child in placement – what is their daily lived experience – appointments attended and how the child is doing etc.;
- Provide detailed information and the development plan to the Independent Reviewing Officers who undertake Foster Carer Reviews.

At End of Placement

- Support the family as much as possible in what can be a very difficult time;
- 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;
- Assist the Foster Carer to complete their end of placement report if required;
- Attend Placement Stability meetings as required.

6. Tasks of Supervising 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:

- Support the family;
- Discuss fully, with the carer and their family, all the issues that have led to the allegation, as agreed at the Strategy Meeting;
- Make the carers aware of the process and of their rights during an investigation;
- Make the carers 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.