

Sefton Supervision and Support of Foster Carers Policy

December 2022

POLICY INFORMATION SHEET	
Service Area	Children's Social Care
Date effective from	December 2022
Responsible Officer	Service Manager - Fostering
Date of Reviews	December 2023
Status	Mandatory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (all staff named must adhere to guidance) 	
Target Audience	Foster carers, fostering service, children's social workers
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Related Document (s)	
Superseded Documents	2017 version

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1. Introduction

This policy should be read alongside the Sefton Recording Policy for Foster Carers.

Foster carers provide day-to-day care for children within their homes. This is a rewarding but challenging job. Foster carers are not alone – they work as part of the team around a child, and must be supported by others in that team to ensure that children are receiving the best possible care. The fostering service is responsible for ensuring this support is provided to foster carers.

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 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.

Foster carer(s) should be fully aware of significant events, and issues they need to keep a written record of and also notify the fostering service supervising social worker of, under Schedule 6 and 7 as follows. It is also important that supervising social workers fully understand their responsibilities in this area.

Significant Events:

- The death of a child;
- A serious or significant injury, illness or accident of a child in their care. *(Please note that this should be considered on a case-by-case basis as what is assessed*

as 'serious or significant' for one child may not be for another child. As a guide, the word 'Serious' is defined as 'having important or dangerous possible consequences'. The word 'Significant' can be defined as something that is "considerable, noteworthy or important"). This also includes 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;

- The outbreak at their home of any infectious disease (which in the opinion of a general practitioner attending the home is sufficiently serious to be notified);
- Details of medication, medical treatment & first aid administered to any child(ren) /YP in foster care
- An allegation that a child in their care has committed a serious offence;
- The Police being called to the carer's home as a result of a serious incident relating to a child placed there;
- A child in their care going missing;
- Details of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in respect of child(ren) / YP's in the foster home;
- Details of allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect in respect of children / YP placed with foster parents. This includes concerns that a child in their care is being criminally or sexually exploited.
- Details of complaints in relation to child(ren) / YP's placed with foster carers

Procedure to be followed when there is a Significant Event:

Foster carers should make their supervising social worker and the child's social worker aware of the concern/incident at the earliest opportunity via a telephone call and as a minimum within 1 working day. Foster carers must also e-mail a completed significant incident/event form to the child's social worker, supervising social worker and fostering duty (FC.Support@sefton.gov.uk). If the supervising social worker is not available, they must phone fostering duty and make them aware of the incident.

Informing the child's allocated social worker will ensure specific advice or support in relation to the child and their Care Plan and Placement Plan is considered.

The supervising social worker (if available) or fostering duty will bring the incident to the attention of the supervising social worker and team manager and ensure the incident is recorded on the foster carer record on LCS and added to the notifications spreadsheet held by the fostering service.

NOTE - in circumstances where a foster carer is not able to e-mail a completed significant incident/events form to the service at the time, the completed form must still be completed and provided to the supervising social worker and fostering duty at the earliest point afterwards.

The team manager will decide on the course of action to be taken and record a management decision/direction on the foster carer record and also the notifications spreadsheet held by the fostering service, highlighting the action to be taken. This enables scrutiny and oversight of all significant events/notifications by managers in the service, including identification of any patterns/themes.

The team manager will make a judgement on whether the fostering service manager needs to be immediately notified.

The supervising social worker will keep the foster carer updated of the actions agreed.

Foster carers must ensure they keep clear records of all incidents/events/issues (**see Sefton Recording Policy for Foster Carers for further information**). Foster carers should also keep a running log of significant incidents/events using the appropriate template, to assist in identifying themes/patterns/progress etc.

If a foster carer is unsure whether a particular issue/incident requires the fostering service to be notified, they should discuss this with their allocated worker. If the worker is not available, they should contact the fostering service duty worker.

NOTE – Supervising Social Workers should use the ‘Allegations’ Tab on LCS to record allegations against a foster carer.

2. Planned Supervision Visits

A programme of supervisory 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 fostering team manager. Visits should be recorded by the supervising social worker on the Foster Carer Supervisory Visit Form on LCS.

Supervision and support are not mutually exclusive and go hand in hand. Supervision is essentially a supportive and enabling two-way process to:

- Ensure 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 are supported to achieve this;
- To assess the parenting capacity of the foster carer and how they are meeting the needs of any child placed in their care;
- Provide appropriate monitoring and feedback on the foster carer's work to ensure [National Minimum Standards and Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers](#) are fully met;
- 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:

- d. Their health, cultural, educational, leisure and contact needs – and any support needs;
- e. Progress and work with respect towards each child's Care Plan;
- f. Any accidents, injuries and illnesses experienced by each child;
- g. Any complaints in relation to children placed with them and their outcomes;
- h. Preparing for independence. Practical use of and recording of the striving to be thriving model and the Re-settlement Passport
- i. Evidencing Lifework
- j. Any concerns around behaviour management in relation to children they are caring for;

- k. Significant events;

- l. Any medication, medical treatment or first aid administered.

- m. Training/development issues for the foster carers and their family;

- n. Safe caring and health and safety issues;

- o. Foster carer's recording which is to be reviewed by the Supervising Social Worker and uploaded regularly to the foster carer record on LCS.

- p. Any additional support that is needed and how this is to be provided

The supervision visits should be recorded on the Foster Carer Supervisory Visit Form on LCS. In addition, the Supervising Social Worker should record a 'foster carer supervisory contact' on LCS, which should include the date of the visit and refer to the completed form in the 'Forms' section on LCS. The Supervision form should also be signed by the foster carer and the supervising social worker. Support visits should be recorded on the 'foster carer support visit' tab on LCS.

A record of all meetings should be kept on the foster carers record on LCS and one copy given to the foster carers.

The supervision records will inform the foster carer's annual review

Supervision in Relation to Regulation 24 Foster carers:

Regulation 24 carers should be receiving supervision due to their status as temporary foster carers. As the carers are still in the assessment process, assessment visits should be recorded as supervisory visits using the 'foster carer supervisory contact' in the carer/adopter tab in LCS. This will enable LCS to run reports.

This enables the assessor to write up the assessment visit and capture elements of the evidence such as the child's views, observations of bedrooms, any significant events/issues and how these are to be managed and any support needs the carer has and how this is to be provided.

3. Personal Development Plan (PDP)

The Personal Development Plan (PDP) should be discussed between the Supervising Social Worker and the foster carer as it becomes the framework for supervising foster carers during their first year and subsequent years of fostering. A review of the PDP should be presented to fostering panel with their first annual foster care review and also be discussed at all subsequent foster carer reviews. Supervision and foster carer reviews should include discussions about how foster carers are applying the training they have undertaken, in their day-to-day practice. **(see Foster Carer Annual Personal Development Plan (PDP) and Review)**

4. Frequency of Supervisory Visits

Supervisory visits will be undertaken on a bi-monthly basis and support visits will be undertaken in between this frequency, as and when needed. The support visits may be made for the purposes of support to the foster carer or any member of the foster family.

Where long-term foster care is the child's plan for permanence as recorded in their care plan and the conditions below are met, then the frequency of supervision may be reduced, following consultation with the foster carer and child's social worker.

- the foster carer has agreed to be the child's foster carer until they cease to be cared for,
- an assessment and matching process has confirmed the suitability of the arrangement,
- the child's social worker has confirmed the arrangement to the foster carer, the child and their birth parents
- the plan has been endorsed at the child's looked after review,

All members of the household should be seen by the Supervising Social Worker annually.

It essential that children in placement are seen on a regular basis by the Supervising Social Worker as part of Supervisory Visits.

The Supervising Social Worker should facilitate support groups and networks for foster carers and between approved carers.

5. Unannounced Visits

There should also be unannounced visits at least once a year. The main purpose of the unannounced visits 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 they have visited.

If the foster carers are not at home but the child is present and being cared for 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 on the foster carer record

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 these circumstances the reason for such will be explained to the foster carer.

6. Support and Tasks to be Undertaken by the Supervising Social Worker

Supervising social workers should ensure the following tasks are undertaken:

Post Approval:

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 complete the Training, Support and Development Standards workbook by their first annual review, or soon after if extra support is required;
2. Give the Foster Carers' Handbook to a new carer;
3. Give the 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.
5. Arrange for the foster carer to be set up as a Supplier to the Council

Pre-Placement:

5. Complete risk assessments surrounding bedroom sharing, 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 give 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;

9. Discuss issues relevant to contact with birth parents and other family members;
10. Assist carers in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education;
11. 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 city's insurance policy for carers;
12. 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;
13. Exchange contact numbers with all relevant members of the family, including out of hours support;
14. Organise equipment as required. Be aware of the process for Occupational Therapy referrals for adaptations and items of support for disabled children, and liaise with the child's social worker to ensure these services are acquired;
15. Set date of first visit after the placement;
16. Let the social worker for a child already in placement know when another child is placed.

During Placement:

17. 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 in place;
18. Take part in any Strategy Meetings and Section 47 Enquiry relating to the foster family. Be involved in interviews/support as agreed;
19. Ensure the Supervising Social Worker and the foster carers receive invitations to the child's Looked After Reviews and Child Protection Conferences, and attend when appropriate;
20. Prepare for and attend Foster Carer Review Meetings
21. Ensure training programme is updated and accessed by carers and their family and children;
22. Ensure training is updated and accessed by carers and carers';
23. Visit regularly in accordance with the foster carer's needs, the child's Care Plan and as required;
24. Review the Safer Caring Plan and any changes in household circumstances;
25. 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;
26. Make unannounced visits as required;
27. Update Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on members of the family every 3 years, including those reaching 18 years of age, and other persons who come to live at the home, who are over 18 years;
28. Whilst there is no statutory time interval, as good practice, medical information should also be updated at least every 5 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;
29. Record contact with carers;
30. Provide reports for Panel as required under the relevant procedures;
31. Where appropriate, contribute to Court Reports as agreed with the child's social worker;

32. Maintain the foster carer's file in accordance with the relevant recording Standards [Standard 26 –National Fostering Standards](#). This includes ensuring foster carers record in line with the Recording Policy for Foster Carers;
33. With the foster carer, complete a Personal Professional Development Plan which addresses the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care and Payment for Skills training needs.

At End of Placement:

32. Support the family as much as possible in what can be a very difficult time;
33. 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;
34. Attend Disruption Meetings as required;
35. Ensure the child's social worker is provided with written notice of the end of a placement
36. Ensure information relating to the child is retrieved.

It is important to note that the level and type of support that foster carers need may change with each child in placement and at different times. The fostering service is responsible for providing foster carers with a range of formal and informal support, including formal supervision, short breaks, peer support, access to independent support particularly where an allegation has been made, as well as support for their sons and daughters.

Supervising Social workers play a key role in supporting foster carers to meet the national standards, providing one to one support and workshops as needed and regular virtual support groups They will also advocate on behalf of foster carers when there are issues such as poor communication with other parts of the service and missing information in relation to children placed. A Placement Support Worker can also support foster carers where there are concerns about a child's behaviours/needs and where it is assessed as being needed.

7. Tasks of the Supervising Social Worker and Team Manager if Allegations are made Against the Foster Carer

For the detailed procedure, see Allegations Against Foster Carers Procedure. It is important to note that when an allegation is made, this will be a very stressful time for the foster carer and it is important that this is not lost sight of and support is identified and provided by the fostering service.

Where Allegations regarding the care of a child (standards of care) or child protection are made, the supervising social worker and team manager will ensure the relevant tasks below are undertaken. Tasks 1-6 relate to the supervising social worker and 7-9 the team manager.

1. Support the family, including keeping them up to date.

2. Discuss fully, with the carer and their family, all the issues that have led to the allegation and any subsequent relevant actions as agreed at the Strategy Meeting.
3. Make the carers aware of the process and of their rights during any investigation, including clarifying any aspects of the allegation's procedure.
4. Make the carers aware of alternative support and advice from the Fostering Network and Foster Talk. The supervising social worker should also make the foster carer aware of any conflicts of interest.
5. Ensure the team manager is aware and the foster carer record is updated.
6. Ensure the child's social worker is aware and also the child's social worker for any other child(ren) placed are also made aware
7. The team manager will notify the fostering service manager
8. The team manager will provide management guidance and oversight, and which includes recording the allegation on the allegation spreadsheet held by the fostering service and reviewing and updating it accordingly. This enables scrutiny and oversight of all allegations by managers in the service, including identification of any patterns/themes.
9. Regular liaison with the LADO.

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