

FOSTERING SERVICE THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 All approved foster carers will be supervised by a named appropriately qualified social worker, known as the supervising social worker

The fostering service is a managed one which provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

National Minimum Standards

- 1.2 The role of the supervising social worker is to supervise the foster carer in their task of providing care to a child in care which will improve the child's well being and life chances by promoting the Every Child Matters Five Outcomes – Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Making a Contribution and Achieving Economic Wellbeing.
- 1.3 Supervision in the Fostering Service is a formal arrangement for meetings between carers and their supervising social worker. The main objectives are to ensure carers understand how they contribute overall to services for children and to the plans for the children and young people for whom they are caring, to provide monitoring and feedback on their work and to ensure the foster carer has access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice, to enable the foster carer to provide consistent, high quality care for a child or young person placed in their home.
- 1.4 Supervision meetings should be planned in advance and should have an agenda which has been developed jointly by the carer and the supervising social worker. A written record of the meeting will be kept, with a copy being placed on the carer's file and a copy being provided to the carer.
- 1.5 The supervising social worker's relationship with the foster carer should be based within professional boundaries with a clear understanding that the primary responsibility is to the child in placement
- 1.6 The supervising social worker must work within the National Minimum Standards and the agency's policies, procedures and guidance.

2.0 Following Foster Carer Approval

- 2.1 A supervising social worker will be allocated by a Principal Manager within 7 days of approval of the foster carer to supervise and enable the foster carer to undertake their fostering role. **Ref: Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers**

2.2 Following allocation the supervising social worker will visit the foster carer to:

- Ensure a signed Foster Carer Agreement is on the foster carer file. The supervising social worker will ensure that the content of the Foster Carer Agreement has been read and is fully understood. The foster carer will be sent two copies for signature and will retain one signed copy. The other will be kept on the foster carer's case record, together with the report and supporting documents presented to the Fostering Panel, a copy of the Panel's recommendation and a copy of the approval decision.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Foster Carer Agreement will contain the following information:

- The terms of the foster carer's approval
- The support and training to be provided to the foster carer
- Details of the Out of Hours support arrangements
- The procedure for the review of the foster carers approval
- The procedure for placements of the child/young person
- The procedure for making representations and complaints
- The requirements in relation to confidentiality
- The procedure for behaviour management and unauthorised absences of child/young person placed with the foster carer including the ban on corporal punishment
- The procedures for informing the Fostering social worker of the child/young person's progress and any significant events relating to the child/young person
- The need to give a minimum of 28 days notice in writing if they wish to cease fostering or if they wish to end the child/young person's placement agreement.

- Prepare a formal Supervision Contract, which is signed by all parties and countersigned by the social worker's manager. Where partners are jointly approved as carers, the Supervision Meeting should include both carers wherever possible
- Ensure the foster carer has access to People Directorate, Vulnerable Children and Corporate Parenting policies and procedures and has their personal copies of the Fostering Network's Foster Carer's Hand-Book and the Children's Guide
- Ensure the foster carer understands how they contribute to the authority's services for children/young people including the 5 outcomes, being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being.
- Identify in partnership with the foster carer their induction and training needs and how these will be met
- Ensure that the foster carer maintains an up to date Training Profile
- Ensure that the foster carer has a Safer Caring Policy and guidelines for their household that include risk assessments surrounding bedroom sharing and mixing with other children in the home
- Discuss potential placements. **Ref: Fostering Service Role in Making Placements**
- Ensure that the foster care has read and understands the policy regarding allegations, cause for serious concerns and complaints and that any complaint by

or against a foster carer is investigated in accordance with the relevant procedures.
Ref: Allegations, Serious Cause for Concern and Complaints against Foster Carers.

2.3 Following approval of the foster carer the supervising social worker has responsibility for the following general duties in relation to the foster carer:

- To respond promptly to telephone calls and correspondence from the foster carer. Any telephone calls made by the foster carer must be responded to within 1 working day unless the worker is absent from work on annual leave or ill, in which case the duty social worker will respond to the foster carer within this timescale.
- To ensure supervision visits are undertaken at a minimum frequency of 6 weekly.
- To ensure telephone contact is maintained with the foster carer when there are no children in placement at a minimum frequency of every 6 weeks
- To attend the review of the foster carer's approval, placement meetings, statutory reviews for children or any care planning or professionals meeting as requested.
- To ensure that DBS checks and Health checks are updated every two years or if there is a change in the foster carers circumstances.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

DBS and health checks must be requested 3 months before they are due to expire.

- Where allegations against the foster carer are made, the social worker should support the family and ensure the foster carers understand the processes being followed and where they can seek alternative support and advice e.g. Fostering Network

3.0 Following a child's placement

3.1 The supervising social worker will:

- Inform the social worker for a child already in placement when another child is placed.
- Ensure the child's social worker provides the Essential Information Record 1 and Placement Plan Part 1, even for an emergency placement, and that the carer is given any other relevant information needed to provide appropriate safe care
- Ensure a copy of the Placement Plan Part 1 is placed on the foster carer's file for the duration of the placement
- Attend a Placement Agreement Meeting with the foster carer and the social worker and take part in the completion of the Placement Plan Part 2 within 5 working days of the placement. The Plan must include any further financial payment needed to support the placement including for contact arrangements. It should also record the Care Plan with a date for the 28 day Review.
- Complete at the Placement Agreement Meeting a Placement Agreement Meeting Form and review the Safer Caring Policy for the child in placement.
- Visit every 6 weeks whilst the child is in placement, coordinating visits with the child's social worker and the allocated social work assistant to ensure maximum support to the foster carer and supervision of the child in placement.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

A lower visiting frequency may be agreed for long term, stable placements

- Ensure the lines of communication between the foster carer, the child's social worker and the fostering social work assistant are open and effective
- As part of foster carer supervision give foster carers an opportunity to raise any problems and make sure they are addressed appropriately and provide appropriate feedback on the foster carers' work
- Maintain regular and effective communication with the child's social worker
- Ensure the foster carer is involved in all Review Meetings and is kept fully informed of any changes in the Care Plan
- Ensure the necessary changes are made to the Foster Carer Placement Record on the foster carers' case file.
- Ensure that the social work assistant fulfils their role and responsibilities in respect of support to the foster carers. **Ref: Role of the Social Work Assistant**

4.0 Support to Foster Carers in the absence of Supervising Social Worker

4.1 Supervising social workers work within a pod system where, although each SSW has a primary relationship with individual fostering households, the other social workers within the Pod also share knowledge of their colleague's carer. This prevents foster carers being isolated when their SSW is unavailable.

5.0 General Duties

5.1 Supervising social workers will:

- Take responsibility for family finding for children and young people requiring long term care
- Attend statutory reviews for children in placement and care planning meetings where Family Finding activity is taking place.
- Cover Fostering Service duty system rota
- Undertake assessment of additional family members who may provide short break care for the child as part of the support of the placement
- Undertake initial assessments for family and friends foster carers and present a report to Panel within 6 weeks of the placement of the child

5.2 Supervising social workers are responsible for the development and safety of Stoke-on-Trent Fostering Service and are required to contribute to improvements in service development.

5.3 Supervising social workers share with the child's social worker the responsibility for safeguarding the child/young person whilst in foster care.

6.0 Supervisory Visits

6.1 Foster carers will be visited and supervised at least 6 weekly unless an agreement about alternative visiting arrangements has been agreed between the supervising

social worker and Principal/Practice Manager. Visiting arrangements will remain under regular review. At least one of these visits must be unannounced each year. All visits must be fully recorded on the Supervision of Foster Carers Form.

62 Each supervisory visit must address:

- Any outstanding issues from a previous visit
- Any issues relevant to contact with birth parents.
- Effect of a placement on the foster carer's own family
- Training/development issues for the foster carer and family
- Safer caring and health and safety issues
- Foster carer's recording. The supervising social worker must sign the Foster Carer Daily Log at each visit.

6.3 The main purpose of the unannounced visit will be to look at the home environment and conditions in which a child in care is living. The supervising social worker will need to check:

- Who is in the home
- Who is looking after the child/young person
- If the carer is not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the foster child/young person

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

If the carer is not at home, the social worker should leave a note for the foster carer to say that they have visited. If the foster child/young person is being looked after by someone other than the carer, the social worker should check the identity of that person but should not continue with the visit.

7.0 Annual Review of Approval

7.1 The supervising social worker must attend the annual review of the foster carer's approval. The documentation for the review must be shared with the foster carer prior to the Review Meeting.

7.2 Review documentation must be provided to the Conference and Review Manager at least five working days before the date of the Review Meeting.

7.3 Following the review the supervising social worker must address the actions identified in the Foster Carer Review within timescales.