



Supervision and Support of Foster Carers Policy

SUMMARY

This policy will provide information of the supervision and support provided by BFfC: Independent Fostering Agency to our carers

OWNER

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VERSION

1.0

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STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- [Standard 21 - Supervision and Support of Foster Carers.](#)

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- [Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.](#)
- [Standard 7 - Develop yourself.](#)

See also: [Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England \(reissued 2015\).](#)

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, making sure 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 \(NMS\)](#) and the agency's policies, procedures and guidance. However, it is the social worker of the child/young person in the foster home who holds responsibility for specific advice or support in relation to the child/ren and his or her care plan and placement plan.

The supervising social worker must also make sure 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.

Before supervision is scheduled, the foster carer/s and the allocated supervising social worker will agree and sign a supervision agreement form. This will detail the frequency of supervision, attendees, and general expectations between the foster carer/s and supervising social worker.

2. Planned supervision visits

Supervision visits should be set up and agreed between the foster carer/s and the supervising social worker from the time of the foster carer/s approval and endorsed by the supervising social worker's line manager.

Where there is more than one foster carer in the household, it is expected that all carers attend supervision at least four to six times a year.

Supervision is essentially a supportive and enabling two-way process to:

- Ensure the foster carer/s understand how they contribute to the Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) services for children
- Enable foster carers to contribute effectively to the plans for the children/young people for whom they are caring

- Provide appropriate monitoring, challenge and feedback on the foster carers care, to make sure the National 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 have 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.

The agenda for each supervision meeting should cover:

- a) Matters arising from the last supervision
- b) Personal issues, e.g., effect of a child living with the foster family
- c) Children/young people living in the foster home, covering:
 - i. health, cultural, educational, leisure and contact needs, and any support needs
 - ii. progress and work in respect towards the child/young person's Care Plan
 - iii. any accidents, injuries, illnesses – experienced by each child/young person
 - iv. any concerns around behaviour management in relation to the child/young person the foster carer is caring for
 - v. any other significant events
 - vi. any medication, medical treatment or first aid administered
- d) Training/development issues for the foster carers and family
- e) Safer caring, health and safety issues and any other compliance (matched with NMS and Fostering Regulations)
- f) Foster carers recording which is to be reviewed by the supervising social worker who should sign the foster carers' diary
- g) Foster carers additional tasks completed (such as transport, childcare, recruitment events etc.)
- h) Any concerns expressed
- i) Any support needs expressed by the foster carers and how they will be met
- j) Any financial issues.
- k) Review the progress of any identified actions at panel and/or the last Annual Review

The supervision visits will be recorded on the current Brighter Futures for Children's Independent Fostering Agency (BFFC IFA) template - Foster Carer Supervision Record and will be signed by the foster carers and the supervising social worker.

A record of all meetings will be kept on the foster carers electronic file (currently Mosaic) and one copy given to the foster carers.

The supervision records will inform the foster carers review – see Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure, which is available on the [Foster Carers Hub](#).

3. Frequency of supervision

Frequency of supervision meetings will be:

- Short-term placements: Monthly
- Long-term placements: Bi-monthly
- Respite and short breaks: Bi-monthly
- Foster carers on hold: At least quarterly
- Foster carers without children/young people living with them: Bi-monthly

Supervision may be more frequent depending on the needs of the child/young person living with the foster family or depending on the need of the foster carers and/or proportionate to the amount of care provided.

4. Unannounced visits

As good practice, there will be a minimum of two unannounced visits per year. The main purpose of the unannounced visit will be to look at the home environment that a child/young person is living in.

The unannounced visits will be mostly undertaken by the foster carers supervising social worker, however there can be circumstances where a delegated member of the agency will conduct the visit. As part of the visit, we will check:

- i. Who is in the home
- ii. Who is looking after the child/young person
- iii. Health and safety (for example check the fridge, fire alarm etc.)
- iv. COSHH and medication is stored securely
- v. If the foster carers are not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the child/young person?

As good practice, the worker will aim to see the child/young person on their own, including the foster carers own children.

If the foster carers are not at home, the supervising social worker should notify them of the attempt to visit (email, phone call).

If the foster carers are not at home but the child/young person is present and being looked after by someone else, the social worker should check the identity of that person but should not continue with the visit.

Unannounced visits will be kept on the foster carers electronic file (currently Mosaic) and one copy given to the foster carers.

Unannounced visits form part of our safeguarding arrangements, and therefore unannounced visits can take place at any time or day. There is an expectation that workers will be welcomed even if the timing seems inconvenient.

5. Support provided by the supervising social worker

Supervising social workers will endeavour to offer responsive support to our foster carers, making sure the needs of children/young people in their care are being met.

The supervising social worker will:

- make sure the foster carers are given appropriate supervision and will review the foster carers training and development needs
- be sensitive and supportive but may at times be required to challenge the foster carers. The foster carers should also feel they can challenge the supervising social worker if required
- support and assist the foster carer in liaising and working with other professionals who are involved with the child/young person they are caring for.
- work with the foster carers to make sure they are meeting all expectations as outlined in the Foster Carer handbook and Foster Carer agreement
- encourage reflective practice with foster carers.

Supervising social workers will ensure the following tasks are done:

Post Approval

- Ensure that all new foster carers complete the **Foster Carer Training, Support and Development Standards**, and that their support, development and training needs are assessed and met by their first annual review.
- Give Foster Carers Handbook to the new foster carers.
- Give Foster Carer Agreement to the foster carers: two copies to be signed and one returned and placed on the carer's file
- Make sure the foster carers attend the induction day
- Make sure foster carers are set up on the system for payment
- Support carers with any specialist issues for disabled children for e.g., support in completing applications for Carers' Allowance, Disabled Living Allowance etc.

Pre-Placement

- Take part in discussions about potential placements, and share and discuss the referral with the foster carers
- Before the children/young people arrive at the home; complete and discuss with the foster carers the matching grid and risk assessment which will include bedroom sharing (each child over three has 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/young people in the home, etc. Discuss and check equipment (especially in the child/young person's bedroom) and ensure it is appropriate to the age of the child/young person living in the foster home
- Complete the pre-placement checklist to make sure the foster carers have all the relevant documents/information
- Take part in planning meetings regarding placements
- Ensure that the child/young person's social worker provides the foster family full information about children/young people who are to live with them, including a history of abuse or suspected abuse and the reason for the placement, the child/young person's educational, medical, religious, racial, linguistic and cultural needs
- Discuss issues relevant to contact with birth parents and other family members
- Discuss how child/young person'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/young people with complex health needs
- Assist foster carers with training needs for appropriate safer carer practice, including skills to care for children/young people who have been abused. For foster carers who offer placements to disabled children/young people, this includes training specifically on issues affecting disabled children/young people
- Discuss financial issues with the carer: allowances, pocket money, leisure activities, toiletries and travelling etc.
- Enquire about holiday plans the foster carers have made, and if the child/young person is able to join them? If not, the foster carers must inform the child/young person'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/young people
- Set date of first visit after the placement
- Let the social worker for a child/young person already in the home know when another child/young person is live with them
- Provide foster carers with training and written policy on behaviour management.

During Placement

- Supervising social workers to complete weekly visits in the first month and fortnightly in the second month, then monthly thereafter
- Children looked after should be seen on their own bi-monthly
- Where necessary, check and follow up on all issues raised during the placement planning meeting. 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 children/young people living with them
- Take part in any strategy meetings and section 47 enquiry 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/young person'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](#), available on the [Foster Carers Hub](#))
- Ensure training programme is updated and accessed by foster carers and carers' family and children
- Visit regularly in accordance with the foster carers needs, the child/young person's Care Plan and as required, (See also [Section 3, Frequency of Supervision](#) and [Section 4, Unannounced Visits](#))
- Review the individual Safer Care Plan as part of supervision and make changes as and when required.
- 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 Service 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
- As good practice, medical information should also be updated at least every three years by writing to the foster carer's GP. In the event of any serious concerns about the foster carer's health, a review of the foster carer's approval should be carried out immediately;
- Record contact with foster carers
- Provide reports for Panel as required under the relevant procedures
- Where appropriate contribute to court reports as agreed with child/young person's social worker
- Discuss how the carers can support young people into adulthood
- Monitors the receipt and quality of records provided by the foster carers

At End of Placement

- Support the family as much as possible in what can be a very difficult time
- Discuss fully with the foster carers 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 carers to complete their end of placement report
- Attend disruption meetings as required.

6. Tasks of social worker if allegations are made against the carer

For the detailed procedure, see **Allegations and Standard of Care investigations 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 any investigation
- Make the carer/s 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.