



Parent and Child Foster Placement

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1. Introduction

Children and Family Community Services (CFCS), wherever practicably possible, support on island parent and child foster placements and recognise the benefits of doing so.

The number of parent and child arrangements in the UK has increased markedly in recent years. The reasons for this are complex. Partly the rise is a result of concerns that, in the words of an influential ruling by Justice Munby (Re. M (2003) 2 FLR 171 Unborn baby MR and Gloucestershire County Council (2003)), separating a parent from their child is a "draconian and extremely harsh measure which demands extraordinarily compelling justification." This concern to respect the privacy of family life if at all possible has led to a determination on the part of all social care bodies to find arrangements that enable parents to remain with their child(ren) while the quality of care given by the parents is observed.

Parent and child placements are far less frequently requested in Guernsey, but Children and Family Community Services (CFCS) is mindful of the need to provide the resource so that families are not then in a position whereby they need to be placed off-island to access appropriate resources.

There is a growing recognition that foster care can be a positive and non-institutional alternative to residential provision, and that with the appropriate preparation, support and supervision such arrangements can and do offer a good opportunity to enable a parent and child to remain together.

The parent and child placements procedure is written to ensure that CFCS operates in line with best practice in terms of Guernsey and UK legislation, national policy and guidance, to ensure that all parents, their babies/children, the foster carers, supervising social workers, managers and children's social workers have the same understanding about the placement tasks, roles, responsibilities and the legal basis for doing so.

Working within this framework provides clarity around the placement's purpose, its duration, and the responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Parent and child placements are complex and demand foster carers to be experienced, skilled and able to work closely as part of a team. Parent and child placements carry unique risks, due to the vulnerability of very young children being placed, and the necessity of having an adult in a carers' home undertaking observation and monitoring whilst mentoring and nurturing the parenting and acting in a parental role, at times, as well as completing parenting tasks.

2. Legal Context for Placement

There are different legal scenarios that apply to parent and child fostering and these will determine the legal context for placement.

Scenario	Age of Parent	Legal status of parent	Legal status of child
1	Under 18	Looked after	Looked after

2	Under 18	Not looked after	Looked after
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Given the potential for confusion regarding legal status, it is important to emphasise that the usual fostering limit remains three in relation to parent and child arrangements. No fostering household may foster more than three children unless all the children are related to each other as siblings, or an exemption has been agreed in relation to specific placements. Even though an adult parent or a non-looked after parent is not counted as one of the three, care should be taken not to overburden foster carers.

3. Recruitment, Requirements and Assessment of Carers

The Family Placement Service is committed to ensuring that only those foster carers with an appropriate aptitude are approached to consider parent and child arrangements.

In summary, the qualities sought by the Service can be described as follows:

Heightened child protection awareness

Serious Case Reviews constantly remind us that the child can quickly become 'invisible' when professionals become drawn into an inappropriate advocacy role in relation to birth parents. This risk is aggravated by the nature of parent and child arrangements. Foster carers taking on this role need to be vigilant for a range of risk factors. They must be very clear about when they need to step in, and when they need to pass on concerns to professionals. Objective assessment skills, combined with a willingness to take decisive action when needed, are therefore essential qualities. Some of the risk factors may relate to the parent's own personal networks (relating to, for example, previous or current drug misuse or domestic violence). Foster carers will need to be sufficiently robust to deal with this potential problem area decisively and with a clear child focus. Equally, a lack of adequate supervision and care for a young infant must be responded to quickly and effectively.

Working with birth parents

By definition, parent and child arrangements require a high level of engagement with birth parents, a level quite unlike other types of fostering.

The ability to form strong relationships with parents, while retaining a clear child focus, is essential.

Keeping excellent written records- Please refer to Record Keeping for Foster Carers Procedure

The extent to which the foster carer's observations will inform the assessment of the parenting of the child will depend upon the specific legal context of the arrangements. However, common to all parent and child arrangements is the need to keep excellent, up-to-date written records, which clearly distinguish between fact and opinion. When appropriate, the records will be needed to contribute to assessments. The Family Placement Service does not support foster carers taking sole responsibility for the assessment of parenting capacity, which the Service believes should remain a professional responsibility, but contributing to an assessment is an important part of the role.

Practical considerations

Sufficient space is essential for successful parent and child arrangements. Balancing the need for privacy against the need for appropriate supervision is a judgement that will need to be made on a case-by-case basis, dependent upon on-going risk assessment of the arrangement, and informed by the placement plan. The foster carer must have sufficient availability to ensure that an appropriate level of supervision can be guaranteed throughout the duration of the arrangement. Given the potentially stressful nature of such arrangements, particular focus upon the proposed foster carer's support network is also good practice supported by the Service.

An ability to work as part of a team

Related to the above points, the ability to work alongside professionals - an essential task for all fostering - is particularly important in relation to parent and child arrangements. Foster carers must be prepared to work to an agreed plan and contribute to the urgent revision of this plan when appropriate.

Experience and capacity for the role

There are specific requirements for carers wishing to be approved as parent

and child foster carers. This applies to carers transferring to the Family Placement Service, newly recruited and current carers.

1. Minimum of 1 years' experience of active mainstream fostering or experience of working in a relevant childcare profession
2. For both carers to evidence that they have completed both mandatory training and the Parent and Child Training Programme. Paediatric First Aid Training either as a standalone course or considered in detail in standard First Aid Training must also be completed. For a fostering couple this applies to both carers
3. A large bedroom/additional bedroom space must be available and provide reasonable living space for a parent/s and child/ren. If the requirement is for the baby to sleep in the carer's room, then this room must have sufficient space to provide for reasonable living space for a cot/ sleeping arrangement for the baby.
4. To be able to evidence skills in objective record keeping and report writing and making verbal representations in professional meetings including giving evidence in court.

If the carer is undergoing assessment and seeking approval for parent and child placements the requirements must be evidenced in the Form F (Fostering) assessment. Existing carers who want to change their approval will need to be assessed and an addendum will be added to their existing Form F (Fostering) assessment which should be presented to the Agency Decision Maker for change of approval if their review is not due and then to Panel or alternatively the above requirements must be evidenced in an addendum at the time of review for presentation at Panel for change of approval. Where a situation arises where an existing young person in placement becomes pregnant and wishes to remain in the placement with their child the same previously mentioned criteria will apply to their carer.

4.Pre-Placement Planning and Placement Planning Meetings

The child's social worker will complete a referral for foster placement and send this to the Family Placement Service duty social worker. The Service will seek appropriately experienced foster carer/s as a match for the placement.

Prior to placement, the Service actively encourages parents and the allocated social worker to visit carers prior to the placement commencement.

In a planned placement the child's social worker will arrange meetings to complete the

- Parent and Child Placement Agreement; and
- The Parent and Child Risk Assessment.

These two documents are viewed as essential additions to complement the Child's Care Plan and are intended to ensure all everyday risks and practicalities are understood and agreed by all parties to the agreements.

Evidence shows that introductions, and planned placements, produce better outcomes.

Placement Planning Meetings

The Family Placement Service will arrange and chair a Parent and Child Placement Planning Meeting before the placement starts or where this is not possible within 5 days of the placement starting. The Placement Planning for Parent and Child Placement template will be used for this purpose. The aim of this meeting is to ensure the Service has all available information relating to the placement and to complete the Parent and Child Placement Agreement and Parent and Child Risk Assessment.

All parent and child placements will be subject to the completion of the Parent and Child Placement Agreement. This will be completed by the child's social worker and sets out the day-to-day arrangements for the placement in detail for the avoidance of any uncertainty or confusion. It remains the responsibility of the Service to fulfil their primary legal duty to produce a Care Plan and the Parent and Child Placement Agreement is intended to be an additional safeguarding measure. The expectation is that contribution to the Agreement will be made by the supervising social worker, the parent/s in place and the foster carer. On completion of the Agreement and at subsequent reviews, further review dates should be agreed and arranged.

In addition to the Placement Agreement, the child's social worker will complete a Parent and Child Risk Assessment document prior to the commencement of the placement or within 7 days to ensure all known risks and behaviour are fully explored and understood by the Service and carers.

The supervising social worker, child's social worker, foster carer and parent will all receive copies of the finalised Parent and Child Placement Agreement and Risk Assessment within 10 days from the commencement of placement.

The risk assessment will need to be reviewed and updated in every foster carer supervision or if there are further incidents or concerns. Where a parent is thought to be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) then a CSE Risk Assessment should also be completed.

If the parent is also in care, then a separate Placement Planning Meeting should take place to ensure that the parents' needs are fully considered both separately and in conjunction with those of their child.

Given the potential complexity of parent and child placements it is essential that all available information, legal documents, risk assessments, and previous Care Plans are made available to inform the placement prior to placement or immediately upon commencement of the placement. The Service has a duty to provide the carer and parent with a copy of the Placement Plan.

The Pre-Placement Meeting and 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 late stage.

A placement should be agreed for a maximum of 12 weeks. Reviews will be held at week 1,4,7 and 10 and 12 and these are a requirement of all placements as this will prevent drift and enhance decision making. Regular reviews must take place to ensure the placement is appropriate and can reach the desired outcome. An extension to the placement timescale can only be agreed, by a senior manager, if there is an identified need for continued parenting work or assessment.

Community support following a successful placement is required to ensure the parent and child are able to manage once the support is withdrawn. This will be agreed for a specific amount of time and clear boundaries as to how this will be managed.

CFCS 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 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, which is the responsibility of the child's social worker. The parenting assessment will support and work alongside the foster placement.

For a parent and child placement to successfully meet its objectives there must be multi-agency working and assessment. The child's social worker 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, family centre, midwife.)

At the Pre-Placement Meeting a clear statement as to the objectives of the placement and the timescale for assessment must be provided by the child's social worker. 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. Resources such as *What is Expected of a Parent and Child Arrangement* and the *Being a Parent Workbook* should be used to support parents in the expectations of them.

5. Visibility of the Child in Placement

Parent and child placements have the added complexity of requiring agencies and carers to manage and understand the needs of the parent and the needs of the young child in placement. These needs can sometime be competing or the needs of the parent manifest more dominantly than the needs of the young child. Serious Case Reviews highlight that agencies can and do lose sight of the child in such circumstances.

To avoid this the Service will encourage separate Care Planning Meetings for both the parent and the young child in placement and to view each as a unique placement.

6.Foster Carer's Roles and Responsibilities

The foster carers' roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined within the Parent and Child Placement Agreement and in the Care Plan including the degree of delegated authority permitted by the carer and the Service.

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/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 carer and parent are able to use the *Being a Parent* workbook to identify any areas for learning and promote the parent's capabilities with parenting.

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 demonstrates less reliance on the carers' support.

The parent and child carers will have knowledge of attachment issues and how to promote attachment between the parent and child placed. The primary attachment the baby needs to make is with his/her parent. The foster carer should promote and support the key attachment between child and parent.

Some parents in parent and child placements are teenagers and the parent and child carers will need to have knowledge and understanding of working with teenagers. In addition, for some placements there needs to be an understanding of how drug and or alcohol misuse will impact on a parent's ability to parent, and on the child's health and development.

The parent and child carer will need to be familiar with recent guidance relating to the care of normal development of babies, covering areas such as weaning, changes in bottle feeding and more recent research about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), which stresses the need to avoid any bed co-sharing at night and offers general guidance on safe sleeping arrangements. Foster carers will work closely with health visitors and other health professionals.

Provision of equipment will be clearly defined within the Placement Agreement. However, foster carers are expected to provide the equipment to meet basic care needs.

To comply with advice and guidance on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, mattresses for cots or Moses baskets will not be shared between babies. A new mattress MUST be used and carers can discuss this with their supervising social worker.

The foster carer will be expected to keep a detailed written 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. The Parent and Child Daily Record template will be used for this purpose. 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 will be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations. The daily records will be signed by both foster carer and parent and will be made available to the child's social worker. These may be used in court proceedings. If the parent declines to sign the recordings, then a note should be made to that effect and the child's social worker should be made aware as soon as possible. See Parent and Child Placement Agreement.

The foster carers will agree to provide 24-hour support when required, transport parent and baby when appropriate, and as agreed.

The foster carer will baby-sit for the baby at an agreed level and in consultation with the foster carer and social worker.

The foster carer will complete and provide an updated Safer Care Plan 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 Safe Care Plan.

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. A risk assessment of the parent and extended family and friends should be completed by the social worker prior to the placement commencing. The level and frequency of physical checks required

by the child's social worker must be clearly agreed within the Parent and Child Placement Agreement. The carers will record and report any child protection incidents and immediately ensure the safety of the child. See Parent and Child Placement Agreement.

The foster carer 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. Please refer to the Record Keeping for Foster Care Procedure and the Foster Carer Recording of Significant Incidents and Events Template.

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.

The foster carer will receive full information prior to placement from the child's social worker in relation to both the parent and the child. The foster carer will liaise with child's social worker, health visitor and supervising social worker and any other professionals involved.

7.Responsibilities of the Parent

The responsibilities of the parent must be clearly set out in the Parent and Child Placement Agreement and Care Plan.

The parent will be expected to care for their child at all times (getting up, bathing, feeding, changing under supervision from carer until it is agreed it is no longer necessary). The parent 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.

The parent will be expected to demonstrate their competence in attending to all their child's physical needs as well as interacting positively with their child.

The parent will be expected to shop, budget and cook for their self and their 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.

The parent 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 the parent's own room. The foster carer cannot be responsible for property or articles that are lost or damaged.

The parent must show they can make, keep and attend any necessary appointments for themselves and their child. The carer can transport if necessary, but the parent needs to show they can plan for appointments in a timely way, and arrange their own transport.

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

It is a requirement of all placements that the foster carers must have access to the parent and child's room to carry out an appropriate level of checks.

Bedrooms must not be locked. This will include standards of cleanliness and ensuring that the environment is healthy and safe.

The foster carer will write accurate Parent and Child Daily Record sheets, which will be shared daily with the parent who will read and sign the record. If there are any differences of opinion on childcare these should be discussed and recorded by the foster carer in the daily record and the foster carer will contact the health visitor and the child's social worker and supervising social worker at the first opportunity to ensure best practice and safe care. If the issues cannot be resolved through discussion, then the matter must be escalated by the social worker or foster carer to the appropriate line manager who will take the matter forward.

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. Further guidance regarding a parent's handling of their child after smoking should be discussed with the health visitor.

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

No involvement with any illegal substances is permitted in the foster carer's home. However, it is recognised that some parents may be supported in a parent and child placement whilst undergoing a treatment programme for substance or alcohol misuse, if this is the case, controlled medications will need to be stored safely in accordance with advice from the dispensing pharmacist or medical practitioner. No alcohol should be kept by the parent in the carer's home.

The 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.

8.Role of the Child's Social Worker

The child's social worker is responsible for the tasks designated to them in this operational procedure. Clear and regular communication with all parties and regular visits and review are essential to the successful workings of parent and child placements. Children's social workers who are working with parent and child placements must have attended the Parent and Child Training Programme.

9.Role of the Supervising Social Worker

All parent and child foster carers must be fully supported by a designated and experienced supervising social worker who will offer a minimum of one phone call a week and weekly visits until agreed otherwise in the social workers' supervision with their line manager. Supervising social workers who are supervising parent and child placements must have attended the Parent and Child Training Programme.

Supervising social workers and foster carers will explore the reflective element of the placement during supervision and ensure there is the opportunity to 'pick up' on cues, explore issues or concerns. The level of contact between the foster carer and their supervising social worker will be clearly determined and reflects the level of supervision these placements require.

10. Family Allowance and Benefits

All parent(s) should be entitled to claim family allowance in respect of their child whilst in the parent and child foster placement and to be supported in claiming for all other relevant benefit entitlements. These benefits will be for the sole use of the parent in their care of the baby whilst in placement.

There is an expectation that the parent pays for all their own personal belongings and expenses related to the baby whilst in the placement wherever practicably possible. The social worker will ensure that the parent has sufficient finances to meet this day-to-day expenditure.

11. Parent and Child Allowance

An allowance will be paid to the foster carer along with a skill level or fee. The foster carers allowance will cover food for the parent and there is an expectation that the parent will take a role in shopping and preparing meals in accordance with the assessment of need. Any medical expenses related to the baby will be met by CFCS during the duration of the placement.

12. Police Checks for Adult Parents

For all parents over the age of 18 an enhanced DBS check will be requested by the Service and the results will be fed into the Parent and Child Risk Assessment. As parent and child placements are planned placements and the parent will be part of the fostering household the Service will carry out an Enhanced DBS check prior to the adult joining the household. The outcome of the DBS check and any other relevant information pertaining to the adult who will be joining the household will be considered as part of a specific risk assessment which must be carried out to assess the safety of all children in the household including birth children of the foster carer. Should a placement be required in an emergency or with short notice, as a minimum, a Basic Police Check will be undertaken on the parent whilst awaiting the outcome of the Enhanced check.

13. Contact with Parent not in Placement

The Service is positive about contact. Depending on the circumstances the Service may not promote parent contact by the not placed parent at the foster carer's home. The child's social worker will identify a suitable contact location to manage any potential risks.