



Support Carer for Foster Carers Procedure

Scope

This chapter deals with the assessments of family and friends of approved foster carers to provide time limited and pre-agreed support to specific children placed in foster care.

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1. Introduction

It is normally necessary to undertake some assessment of the relatives and friends of approved foster carers when they are involved in sharing fostering tasks with the approved foster carer. The following guidance outlines the procedures of the Family Placement Service and the formats to be used when undertaking these assessments. It also seeks to clarify the differences between certain types of caring arrangement that may be used within foster placements.

2. Babysitters

2.1 Definition

All foster carers are likely to have a friend or relative who helps out with the children placed with them. If this is only for a few hours during the day this would be considered 'babysitting'. This could perhaps be for an evening so that

the foster carer can visit friends and family or go to the theatre or shopping without the child.

2.2 Assessment

No formal assessment is required of a babysitter but a babysitter for a child in care must be at least 18 years old. No teenage child in care should be given responsibilities for babysitting a younger child in care. The foster carer who asks a person to baby-sit should be confident in their ability to care for the child and have made sufficient arrangements with them so that they feel confident that the child's welfare will be safeguarded.

2.3 Checks and References

No DBS check is required for a babysitter. Only in exceptional circumstances, where there is a good reason or a specific risk to consider is it necessary for a DBS check to be carried out before a child stays with a babysitter.

2.4 Finance

Normally a babysitter will be paid by the foster carer from their fostering allowance. See *Guide to Allowances and Payments regarding Children in Foster Care*

3. Support Carer

3.1 Definition

If there is an agreed arrangement for the child to be cared for by someone else in the family and friend's network of a foster carer regularly and frequently or if the child is to stay elsewhere for a length of time this person would normally be considered a '**support carer**'.

3.2 Assessment procedure for Support carer

When assessing potential foster carers, the issue of a named support carer should be considered as part of the assessment process and a Support Carer Report (Appendix 2) should be written by the assessing social worker and presented as part of the overall assessment. Once approved, foster carers should keep their supervising social workers informed about their support carer and information should be reviewed at any subsequent Annual Foster Carer Review. The support carer could also be included in any training sessions run for foster carers, including attending the Skills to Foster training course.

The assessment visit (usually only one) should be carried out to gather the following information before any regular overnight or block period of care commences:

- Family composition
- Frequent visitors to the home
- Health and safety checklist to be completed on the home if the accommodated young person is to be cared for in the support carer's home
- Dog and/or Pet Assessment to be completed if the child in care is to be cared for in the support carer's home
- Basic information about care and control of children practices including discussion of no corporal punishment
- Routine practical issues to be discussed including what the individual would do in exceptional circumstances e.g. if the child was sick, if the child misbehaves or becomes unregulated (what their attitude towards discipline is), if the child absconded etc.
- Discuss contact arrangements with the Service if there are problems
- Confidentiality/safer caring agreement signed

If the support carer is suggested post approval, then the same assessment will be required but undertaken by the supervising social worker or another social worker commissioned to do so. In such cases the Service Manager signs off the report and it should be included at the next Annual Foster Carer's Review.

Please refer to Support Carer Assessment and Approval Process, Appendix 1.

3.3 Checks and References

Enhanced DBS checks need to be undertaken of the support carer. 'Foster Carer' is the term to be used on DBS forms for why the person needs a DBS check. If the periods of care are going to be regular and frequent other members of the household will need DBS checks.

The GP for the support carer will also be contacted and asked to verify that the applicant is medically fit to undertake their role.

Every support carer should give two references. The referee should be someone other than a relative who the support carer knows well and would be

able to comment on their childcare abilities and overall fitness for the task of caring temporarily for a child in care.

The referees need to provide a short written statement and this needs to be followed up by a telephone call from the assessor to confirm the reference.

Local Authority checks from all areas where the support carer has lived in the last 10 years as well as employment references will also be sought, to include any voluntary or paid employment with children or vulnerable adults.

3.4 Authorisation

Foster carer applicants going through the assessment process are able to identify who will be their support carer as part of the assessment process and assessments presented to the Fostering Panel at the point they are being considered for approval. A letter will be sent to the foster carer as well as the support carer from the Service following the decision by the Agency Decision Maker to confirm approval.

If the foster carer is already approved and there are changes in the foster carers' support carer or there is no assessment on the support carer yet, the Team Manager will authorise the assessment being undertaken by the supervising social worker. Once the assessment is completed, a copy will be sent to the Service Manager for approval. The foster carers' support will be reviewed in line with their Annual Reviews.

3.5 Procedure for using a Support Carer

It may be that the foster carer is going on holiday for a few days or wants to have a regular break from the young person. The foster carer should inform their supervising social worker and the child's social worker that they would like to use their support carer to look after the child in care with as much notice as possible and this needs to be agreed and authorised as appropriate and necessary to support the placement. Where a relative or friend has been identified by the main foster carer as suitable to provide regular overnight stays or short breaks to the children in placement this can be agreed as part of the child 's plan and is separate to ad hoc babysitting arrangements – see above.

The supervising social worker should be satisfied that the arrangements are appropriate for that child or children and checks made that the child is happy with the arrangement. There should be a detailed day-to-day plan for each

child and full information shared, including contact details for the Team Around the Child. All information can be contained within the Child's Profile. The support carer should also understand the Placement Plan and specific needs of the child.

The supervising social worker should visit once when the child is staying with the support carer ideally during the first week for longer placements. If it is a regular arrangement (e.g. once a month) the supervising social worker need only visit once during the review period (i.e. between Child In Care Reviews).

Recording: Foster carers should keep a clear record of arrangements made with other people who provide temporary care. This should include names, dates, times and place. The supervising social worker should have a recording of the plan for agreed support care arrangements in the carers file.

3.6 Finances

At the point of approval, the foster carers' supervising social worker will action Admin setting the support carer up as a vendor. Additional Funding Forms will be completed prior to any period of a child staying with the support carer. Payment will not be made if there is not prior agreement to the arrangement. Support Carers are paid the age-related fostering allowance for the child(ren) that they care for. This payment is exempt from Income Tax, although does have to be declared on Personal Income Tax returns.

4. Short Break Foster Carers

It should be clear that this arrangement is quite separate from respite arrangements where the young person is being placed with another approved foster carer because the child has been assessed as having particularly complex needs and/or the usual foster carer needs a break.

If any child in care stays with a support foster carer for over 35 days in a year than this carer should be assessed as a respite foster carer and a full Form F should be completed.

5. Overnight Stays for a Child in Care

Foster carers can give permission for overnight stays. These types of arrangements should be dealt within the Placement Plan. The agreement is dependent on the assessed needs of the child and is drawn up with the supervising social worker and child's social worker. Find further details in the '*Overnight Stay*' procedure.

Foster carers should always have the contact details of where the child is staying. They should make contact with the household beforehand and make sure the parent and child have the carer's contact details. The foster carers should log this information in their recording.

APPENDIX 1:

Support Carer Assessment & Approval Process



APPENDIX 2: Support Carer Report

Purpose of Support Carer Assessment:

Where a relative or friend has been identified by the main foster carer as suitable to provide regular overnight stays or short breaks to the children in placement, a proportionate assessment of the relative or friends' suitability as a Support Carer will be undertaken by a Supervising Social Worker.

Support Carers are not Foster Carers. The child/young person's Foster Carer(s) remains responsible for them at all times.

PART 1 (To be completed by the Support Carer) BASIC INFORMATION / APPLICATION				
1. Foster Carer(s) whose children / young people will be cared for:				
Full Name(s):				
Address:				
2. Support Carer(s):				
Full Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Ethnicity	Relationship to Foster Carer
3. Support Carer(s) household:				
Full Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Ethnicity	Relationship to Support Carer

4. Accommodation (only complete if child/young person is likely to be cared for in your own home)				
Is there a suitable bedroom / bedroom space available for the child(ren)?				
Brief description of accommodation (including outside space):				
5. Pets (only complete if child/young person is likely to be cared for in your own home)				
Brief description of pets (<i>Name(s), breed, age, health, identified risks / action to mitigate risks</i>):				

<p>6. Personal Referees (Two written references, not including the Foster Carer)</p>	
Personal Referee 1	
Name	
Address	
Telephone Number(s)	
Relationship to Support Carer(s)	
Number of years known	
Personal Referee 2	
Name	
Address	
Telephone Number(s)	
Relationship to Support Carer(s)	
Number of years known	

<p>PART 2 (To be completed by the Family Placement Team)</p> <p>CHECKS & CONFIDENTIAL REFERENCES</p>
Enquiries Checklist:

This is a basic checklist to ensure that there are no significant known issues about the Support Carers that could place child(ren) at risk.

Checks	Support Carer 1	Support Carer 2
DBS		
<i>Any additional information including a summary of all convictions and cautions that show up on the DBS certificate, however minor or dated, and senior management decision.</i>		
HEALTH	Support Carer 1	Support Carer 2
LOCAL AUTHORITY		
Other Local Authority or Code of Conduct Check (where Support Carer has lived in another county / country within last 10 years)		
If the child(ren) will be looked after by the Support Carer in the Support Carers home, a health and safety assessment and pet assessment must be completed		

and the above checks for all young people / adults (over 18) in the household must be completed. Include details of checks here:

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Date of Health & Safety Assessment:	
Date of Dog/Pet Assessment:	

Summary of Interview Personal Referee 1

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Summary or Interview Personal Referee 2

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<p>PART 3 (To be completed by the Supervising Social Worker)</p> <p><i>Support Carers</i></p>
<p>a. Summary of Support Carers and their household (include personalities, identities, interests, and quality of relationships / dynamics within the household)</p>
<p>b. Summary of relationship with Foster Carer(s) (include nature of the relationship / how met, how long known, level of contact, motivation to provide short periods of care to children)</p>
<p>c. Summary of Support Carers experience of caring for their own or any other children (include parenting strategies, times of stress / challenge, and managing children's behaviour)</p>

d. Summary of Support Carers experience of working with others / communicating effectively / maintaining confidentiality

PART 4 (To be completed by the Supervising Social Worker)

CHILD / YOUNG PERSON

Name of child/young person

D.O.B. of child / young person

a) Pen picture of child/young person & why Support Care is being sought for them (include personality/character, likes/dislikes, interests)

b) Child / young person's relationship with prospective Support Carer(s) and their household (including how long known, level of contact/time spent together, activities shared, challenges and if/how resolved)

c) Child/young person's views and feelings about Support Carer(s) and being looked after by them.

d) Child / young person's Social Workers views (or any other person considered relevant by the child's Social Worker) about the Support Care arrangement.

PART 5 (*To be completed by the Supervising Social Worker*)
ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION

1. Social Worker Analysis of the Suitability of the Support Carer to look after named child / young person (include analysis of the Support Carers):

- Motivation to look after child/young person / support Foster Carers
- Understanding the role of a Support Carer and ability to maintain routines, confidentiality, work with others and share concerns
- Whether & how arrangement is in the best interests of the child / young person
- Understanding and ability to meet child / young person's physical and emotional health, learning and development needs for short period of time
- Understanding and ability to care safely for child / young person & protect them from harm
- Any risks or vulnerabilities of the proposed arrangement and whether / how these can be managed

2. Social Workers Recommendation

Support Carer 1	Name
	Signature

	Date:
Support Carer 2	Name
	Signature
	Date:
Supervising Social Worker	Name
	Signature
	Date:
Family Placement Service Team Manager	Name
	Signature
	Date:

APPENDIX 3 - Service Manager Decision for Support Carer/s

I agree / do not agree to the above relative / friend of Family Placement Service Foster Carers providing Support Care to the child/young person names above. This is subject to:

- a Carer-to-Carer Profile being completed by the main Foster Carer regarding the child / young person and shared with the Support Carer(s).
- The child / young person's Safe Care Plan being shared with the Support Carers.
- The arrangement being reviewed annually as part of the Foster Carers Annual Review or at any other time if concerns arise as to the suitability of the Support Carers.

Comments:	
Signed:	
Name:	
Date:	