

**ROCHDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
PROCEDURE**

**THE LEVEL 4 (CONTRACT) FOSTERING**

**INTRODUCTION**

Level 4 (Contract) Fostering is a highly specialised short or long term family placement option for a small number of children and young people who persistently display the most challenging emotional and behavioural difficulties. These are to such an extent that they cannot be successfully placed in a mainstream foster home and otherwise would need to be placed in a specialist out-of-borough placement.

The number of Level 4 Carers and placements is determined by the needs of children requiring this specialist form of placement.

The Level 4 (Contract) Fostering is managed within the Fostering Team.

**LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE**

This procedure is based on the Children Act 1989 and the Fostering Service (England) Regulations (2011).

**POLICY STATEMENT**

It is a right for every child or young person requiring care to live, if they so wish, in a family no matter what level of emotional and behavioural difficulties they present.

The role of a Level 4 Foster Carer is to provide children and young people who display a high level of emotional and behavioural disturbance with a short or long-term family placement. Such children and young people have complex needs and so will require a high level of supervision and individual attention.

The aim of the Level 4 (Contract) fostering is to provide a high quality professional standard of care for children and young people within a family setting. The character of the care given should be personalised in the manner of good parents nurturing their own children towards maturity and independence from a stable secure and safe home base.

A comprehensive and early assessment of a child or young person's long term needs together with careful matching and preparation for placement will increase the likelihood of placement success.

Level 4 fostering is a positive fostering option for a small number of difficult-to-place children and young people. They can be long or short term placements and for these children and young people, Level 4 foster placements should provide a high quality placement option and should be sought as swiftly as possible once the need has been assessed.

**CROSS REFERENCES TO OTHER PROCEDURES**

Please also read the following policies and procedures in the Child Care manual:

Approval of Foster Carers F03 (b)

**CONTENT**

**Section**

1. Who needs level 4 Placements
  2. Service requirement of contract scheme foster carers
  3. Recruitment, assessment, training and approval of contract foster carers
  4. Support to contract carers
  5. Support groups
  6. Holiday/respite arrangements for carers
  7. Retainers
  8. Reviews of contract foster carers
  9. Finance
  10. Employment tax & national insurance
  11. Referral process of a child/young person to the contract scheme
  12. Matching considerations
- Appendix A Contract Fostering Scheme – Referral Form SSD/0475

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
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**1. WHO NEEDS LEVEL 4 PLACEMENTS**

1.1	<p>ALL the following criteria need to be met for a child or young person to be eligible to be placed with a Level 4 Carer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child is aged 5 to 15 years of age.</li> <li>• The child may require long term or short term care.</li> </ul>	All staff to note
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PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child/young person has already experienced a significant level of disruption due to his/her own behavioural/emotional difficulties (either within a foster home or a Children's Residential Unit). A child or young person who has experienced only one disrupted placement may require a Level 4 placement if there were clear evidence that they have significant attachment difficulties which would indicate a high risk of future placement breakdown.</li> <li>• The child/young person has severe emotional/behavioural problems that result in persistent challenging behaviour within their current placement.</li> <li>• The child's/young person's needs cannot be met by being placed within a mainstream foster home (short term, long term foster care or supported living) because of the level of his/her challenging behaviour or the significant risks s/he poses to him/herself and/or other children or adults.</li> </ul>	

## 2. SERVICE REQUIREMENTS OF LEVEL 4 FOSTER CARERS

2.1	Potential Level 4 Foster Carers will have proven child care experience which may include fostering, adoption and/or relevant professional experience.	All staff to note.
2.2	Level 4 Carers must fulfil the requirements and expectations that apply to all Rochdale MBC Foster Carers.	All staff to note.
2.3	<p>In addition Level 4 carers will need to fulfil ALL the following requirements and expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 4 Foster carers cannot take other forms of paid employment as they must be available at all times to meet the needs of the child or young people in placement, to attend training, or provide other support work. Having other work could compromise their care responsibilities towards the child/young person. In households where</li> </ul>	All staff to note.

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
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	<p>There are 2 carers at least one carer must be available free from outside work commitments at all times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 4 Carers will not usually have any other vulnerable children and young people (under the age of 18 years) living in the household. However there are circumstances where a carer may be approved to look after more than 1 child subject to careful matching. This is dependent upon their skills, abilities and careful matching.</li> <li>• It may be appropriate to consider Level 4 applicants who have older children living at home if they are stable, mature and have made an informed agreement with their parents' decision become level 4 Foster carers. This may, however, limit the range of children whom they are available to take, and consequently they may encounter extended periods between placements that in turn will result in reduced finances, see Section 7.</li> <li>• Level 4 Carers will have the ability, with appropriate supervision and consultation, to work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes and skill development, to appropriately manage and modify challenging behaviour and actively support specific educational programmes with children and young people.</li> <li>• Level 4 Carers will be able to demonstrate an understanding of attachment difficulties and how they as carers might look after such children and young people in a way that may enable them to develop more secure attachments.</li> <li>• Level 4 Carers will be required to attend any training as appropriate and necessary. In addition level 4 Carers will be expected to attend and participate in support groups. In households where there is a secondary carer there will be an expectation that s/he participates in discussions with their allocated SSW and attend training and support groups in line with the training policy.</li> </ul>	
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PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 4 Carers are expected to participate in training other foster carers and contributing specifically to the development of the Fostering Service.</li> <li>• Level 4 Carers will, between placements or when the demands of the placement allow, a) provide support to other foster carers to avoid a placement breakdown (e.g. time out or day care),</li> <li>• Level 4 Carers have the right to refuse a placement but are required to provide a valid reason.</li> <li>• Where placements end in an unplanned way Level 4 Carers are expected to attend the Disruption Meeting.</li> </ul>	

### 3. RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT, TRAINING AND APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOSTER CARERS

3.1	<p>Recruitment of Level 4 Carers may be from existing foster carers or through advertising. If existing approved foster carers apply to join the scheme they will undergo a Skills Based Fostering assessment (which may be completed through the review process) for approval as Level 4 Carers. Applicants must have a Level 3 Diploma in or equivalent.</p>	All staff to note
3.2	<p>The assessment and approval process for Level 4 Carers is the same as for all other foster carers. See F03 (b)</p>	Cross Ref: F03 (b)
3.3	<p>All applicants as level 4 carers will be expected to attend the Skills To Foster Preparation Group training that is required for all recruited foster carers applicants unless they have attended a similar course in the last 2 years.</p>	
3.4	<p>If any concerns arise following STF training then a Social Worker will visit the applicant(s) to discuss the reasons why the application will not be progressed to the assessment stage</p>	
3.5	<p>In some cases, assessment and training may take place concurrently.</p>	

3.6	On completion of the Training Course, applicants who are not currently approved and have successfully completed the training will receive the AA1 form and be asked to send it to the Fostering Team if they wish to proceed	
3.7	In addition to the standard requirements of all fostering assessments, particular attention will be given to the skills and abilities of the applicants to fulfil the specific service requirements of Level 4 (Contract) Foster Carers, see Section 2.	

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
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3.8	During the assessment process if it is evident that the applicants are not suitable as Level 4 Carers then this should be discussed with the SSW's, Line Manager and the applicants. Consideration should be given about whether the applicants would be suitable as Level 2 or 3 Carers	Fostering Team Manager.
3.9	The Supervising Social Worker will make arrangements with the Panel Administrator to book onto Fostering Panel.	
3.10	The Fostering Panel will consider the application and make a recommendation to the ADM. The ADM will make the decision about approval.	

4. SUPPORT TO CONTRACT CARERS
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4.1	Professional support to Level 4 Carers is the key to the successful placements of hard-to-place children/young people who demonstrate significant behavioural difficulties. It is important that Level 4 Carers are adequately equipped and trained to undertake their role.	All staff to note.
4.2	The allocated SSW has the responsibility for supervising and supporting the Level 4 Carer, the maintenance of the placement and use of the resource. All placements should be supported by both the SSW and the child's social worker who should identify the other areas of support required for individual placements.	Social Worker.

4.3	The SSW will visit the carer(s) on a minimum of 6 weekly basis with additional telephone contact between and additional visits as required.	
4.4	Minutes of supervisory visits including key issues discussed, advice given and decisions made will be recorded on ICS with a copy to the carers.	
4.5	Professional consultation and advice will be available to Contract Carers from the CAMHS Service.	
<b>5. SUPPORT GROUPS</b>		

5.1	Level 4 Carers will have access to the Foster Carers' Support Groups. The purpose of these groups are to provide foster carers with the opportunity to share, consider ways of overcoming placement difficulties that they are experiencing, and to provide a forum for carers to extend their knowledge and skills.	
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<b>6. HOLIDAY/RESPIRE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONTRACT CARERS</b>
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6.1	Level 4 Carers can, where necessary, nominate to have two weeks per year when they will be unavailable to the Department but will continue to be paid (full fee but no allowances). This is a recognition of the high intensity of the work that Level 4 Carers do and is aimed to reduce the possibilities of 'burn-out' and disruptions.	All staff to note.
6.2	Given that children and young people are often placed on the Scheme with families on a long-term basis, respite/holiday arrangements must be child-centred and carefully planned (at least 8 weeks in advance).	All staff to note.
6.3	During the approval process families will be encouraged to identify an appropriate substitute carer (relative, friend, or other foster carers) who would be able to look after the children. This will offer continuity for the children and young people. Relevant references and checks under delegated responsibility will be required. Such	

	arrangements will need to take account of the observation and wishes of the children/young person in placement and be in accordance with their care placement plan.	
6.4	Alternatively consideration could be given to the child/young person going on holiday (or perhaps an activity holiday) whilst the Carers are away.	All staff to note.

## 7. RETAINERS

	PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
7.1	Level 4 Carers will be paid a retainer between placements. This will be the full professional fee for a period of up to 2 months. This is to ensure that there is both continuity of income for the Contract Carers and gives the Department time to make further planned and well-matched long-term placements.	All staff to note.
7.2	To be entitled to retainer payments Level 4 Carers need to remain available for other appropriate duties as described earlier (see section 2).	All staff to note.
7.3	During periods of introductions level 4 Carers will receive their full professional fee plus boarding out payments for overnight stays.	All staff to note.

## 8. REVIEWS OF CONTRACT FOSTER CARERS

8.1	The Foster Carer Reviews will take place annually and following the end of each long term contract placement (whether planned or as a result of a disruption).	
8.2	Level 4 Foster Carer Reviews are arranged by the SSW and heard at the Fostering Panel.	
8.3	Views from the children in placement, children who have left the placement during the review period, relevant schools, health services, parents and child care Social Workers of the children in placement during the review period are required for these reviews and should be sought by the SSW at least 6 weeks in advance of the review.	

## 9. FINANCE

9.1	Level 4 Carers will be paid a fee equivalent to the mid-point of Residential Social Workers (Grade A/B at a weekly rate). Only one fee will be paid per Contract Fostering household. The fee will be reviewed annually and is index-linked unless a child's needs are so complex that 2 carers are required on an ongoing basis (ie. for children with severe disabilities who require 24/7 care and monitoring).	All staff to note.
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### PROCEDURE

### TASK ALLOCATION

9.2	In addition Contract Carers will receive the basic boarding out payments for the child/young person at long-term fostering rates. Level 4 carers will <u>not</u> be entitled to additional cost of care allowances.	All staff to note.
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## 10. EMPLOYMENT TAX & NATIONAL INSURANCE

10.1	Level 4 Carers have self-employed status.	All staff to note.
10.2	Level 4 Carers are responsible for declaring their income to the Inland Revenue. Contract Carers are not taxed on the basic fostering allowances as these are meant to reimburse for actual costs incurred. The professional fee is liable to tax, if it is for reward, rather than to meet the extra costs of caring for foster children.	All staff to note.
10.3	The Department will be responsible for issuing an annual statement of payments made to each Level 4 Carer for tax purposes.	All staff to note.
10.4	National Insurance –level 4 Carers will be liable to pay National Insurance contributions that will entitle them to all the contributory benefits.	All staff to note.

## 11. MATCHING CONSIDERATIONS

11.1	When a Level 4 Foster Placement becomes available matching considerations must address the suitability of the placement to meet the child's needs. The SSW will assess the suitability of the match and liaise with the	All staff to note.
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11.2	Fostering Manager. The Fostering Manager will then decide which child/young person has the potential to be viably matched to the available placement.	
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