



# Parent and child foster placements Information booklet for parents

Stockport Family

## INTRODUCTION:

- You have been given this booklet because social workers and other professionals who have been involved with you feel that you will benefit from extra support in parenting your child. They think that a foster placement for you and your child is needed to ensure your child's safety and well being
- As a parent you will have a range of emotions about your child. You may feel very excited about the birth of your baby and be looking forward to living at home and taking care of your child. You may feel worried and anxious about the plan for you to live in a foster placement with your baby or child or you may be upset and confused about why this decision is being made. |
- This booklet gives you information that will help you to understand more about what to expect in a parent and child foster placement. It will also explain what this might mean for you and your child. It would be a good idea to discuss this information with your partner, if you have one, and your solicitor. If, having read this booklet, you have any questions please speak to your social worker, or the Parent and Child Champion in Stockport Family.



# What is a parent and baby placement?

A parent and baby placement is a fostering arrangement where a parent and their child are placed together in a fostering family. The placement is usually made following the birth of a baby. However the placement of a slightly older child might also be made in some circumstances. This might mean the placement begins following a period of time when you have looked after your baby at home or in another situation.

Placements can be made voluntarily, with your agreement, however most placements are made as a result of care proceedings and decisions made at court. You may have wanted to live at home with your baby but the people involved with you have a different view. The social workers may have felt that a foster placement for you and your baby is the best way to ensure your baby's safety and well being.

Most placements are for mothers with their babies but placements are also offered to fathers and babies if the father is to be the main carer.

The purpose of your placement is to support you to develop the parenting skills needed to care for your child and the ability to put the needs of your child first.

Difficulties may have been identified while you were pregnant or caring for your baby at home or as a result of the care you may have provided in the past to your other children. The foster carer will play a role in providing support and advice to you but will also contribute to the assessment of your parenting.



## Who makes the plans about the placement?

- The social worker will be working closely with you to undertake an assessment of whether you can care safely for your baby. If the decision is made that a parent and baby foster placement for you and your baby is required this plan will be discussed fully with you and as part of any court proceedings.
- Sometimes placements are arranged at very short notice because of decisions made at court and there may not be an opportunity for you to visit the placement before you move in. However if the placement has been planned your social worker will arrange a visit for you to meet the foster carers before you move in, get to know the carer, and share your worries.
- A Placement Agreement Meeting will be arranged by the social worker ideally before you move into the placement but if that is not possible within a few days of your move. The Placement Agreement Meeting is chaired by a social work manager and you will attend with the social workers and the foster carers. Your child's social worker will discuss with you the plans for this meeting and who needs to attend.
- At the Placement Agreement Meeting you will hear details of how the placement will work, the support that will be provided and what is expected of you. Keeping to the agreements will play an important part in the assessment of your progress.
- Arrangements for contact for you and the baby with your partner or members of your family will need to be discussed at this meeting. Everything that is discussed will be written into an agreement and you will be given a copy of this after the meeting.
- During the Placement Agreement Meeting there will be a discussion about how long the placement will last. This will depend on your particular circumstances and the progress of the assessment and the plan will be reviewed at regular intervals throughout the placement. However it is important that plans are made for your baby in a timely way



# When you are living in the foster placement

- It can take a while for most parents to settle into the foster placement and it is recognized that it can be quite difficult initially for parents to get used to living within a different family home. The foster placement may also be at some distance from your home and you may also have to get used to living on a temporary basis in a different area.
- You might find it difficult living apart from your partner or family and friends but it is important that you focus on the care of your baby and discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your foster carer or your child's social worker.
- It is usual that you will be required to do things together with your foster carer for an initial time limited period at the start of your placement. This is to help you settle in and to ensure that you understand what is expected of you in caring for your baby.
- As the placement continues time spent outside the placement with your baby will be discussed.



# Assessments and Support

- At the initial placement planning meeting you will be given a contract that will clearly explain how the assessment of your parenting will work, how you will know what you are doing well, and what you may need extra help or support with.
- The court may have agreed that further specific assessments will also need to be completed to help contribute to the decision making about the plans for your baby.
- **The foster placement is a real opportunity for you to demonstrate your commitment to the care of your baby and to use the advice and support provided by the foster carers**
- There may be times when you may feel frustrated about the plans or disagree with a decision that has been made. It is very important that you consider any decisions about the placement very carefully and do not move out away from the placement without discussing this fully with your child's social worker as such a move may in some situations result in a decision being made that you are not able to resume the care of your baby.
- If the placement progresses successfully decisions will be made at review meetings and within the court process about plans for you to move into the community. Your child's social worker will be talking to you about what support you may need to manage this move to your own home. It is recognised that parents may well need additional focused support to continue the good progress made in providing safe care to their baby.



# Who are the people involved? And what is their role ?

- **Parents** Whilst you are in placement you are expected to take full responsibility for the care of your baby unless a different arrangement has been agreed. This will mean you will be preparing bottles and or meals for your baby, providing clothes and toys and meeting your child's basic care needs for example bathing your baby and washing your baby's clothes. The foster carer will advise and support you to do this if you are feeling unsure.
- **Foster Carers** The foster carers have an important role to play in supporting you and making a record of your progress in placement. Their role includes offering advice and guidance to help you to care for your baby. The foster carer will try to help you to develop valuable practical skills, for example feeding, nurturing and playing with your baby. They might also be able to help with cooking, budgeting, and self care skills if this is needed. Parent and Child foster carers are usually experienced carers who are offered additional training and support to make sure they are skilled in this fostering task. The foster carers will be asked to observe you with your baby and make an assessment of how you care for him or her. They will record how things are going in placement on a daily or weekly basis and will look at your basic care of your baby, how you play and stimulate him or her, how you keep your baby safe and your ability to respond to advice and support offered. These reports will be shared with you and discussed at the weekly review meetings. You will be given the opportunity to comment on them. These are then passed to your child's social worker and will help inform the overall assessment and decisions that might be made.

## Other Professionals

**Health Professionals** The **midwife** will be responsible for your baby's health care needs and will visit you for at least the first 10 days after your baby's birth. She is there to help with any difficulties you might have and to support you with feeding and caring for your newborn. The midwife will hand over care to **the health visitor** who is there to provide support and advice as your baby grows. The health visitor will monitor your child's health and development until they reach 5 years old. They can also provide helpful information about resources and support services for parents. They are sometimes represented by someone from the **Family Nurse Partnership**, they work specifically with new young parents

**Social workers** Your baby will have their own social worker allocated to work with you. It is likely that you will have had some involvement with them as part of the assessment of your parenting before your baby was born or as part of the plan for you to move to a parent and baby placement. They will continue to visit you and your baby in placement and will be in regular contact with the foster carer about how the placement is going and how you are managing the care of your baby. If your case is being discussed in court your child's social worker will be attending court to present the local authorities plans for your baby.

Your foster carer will also have their own **supervising social worker** who will work with them to support you in placement. You are likely to meet your carer's social worker at meetings and when she visits the placement.

If you are in care yourself or if you are a recent care leaver you will also have a **personal advisor**. The personal advisor will not be involved in considering the plans for the baby but may be able to support you in meetings and offer some guidance and advice about what is happening with you and your baby

A **children's guardian** is a social worker that will be appointed by the court to represent your baby in the care proceedings. The guardian will meet with you to talk about what is happening in the placement and plans for your baby. The guardian will also prepare a report for the court explaining their views on the plans for your baby.

**Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** Every child who is placed in foster care must have their placement reviewed within the first month, three months after this and at six monthly intervals. This is to make sure that the plans made for the child are being followed. This meeting is called a Looked After Child Review and will be chaired by the IRO. The meeting will discuss your baby's health and development, contact your baby might be having with other people in your family and what the plan for the future might be. You will be given the opportunity to make a full contribution to the meeting to say how you think the placement is working. You will also have the chance to say how you are feeling about the plans for your baby and any additional support you feel you and the baby may need.

# Finances

- Your individual circumstances should be discussed with your child's social worker. The social worker may be able to offer some advice and support with applications for benefits including child tax credits and child benefit when your child is no longer in care. It is also important that you discuss your housing situation with your child's social worker as you can continue to claim housing benefit to retain your accommodation for a period whilst you are living in the foster placement.
- Whilst you are in placement you will be responsible for providing milk, nappies and all other items to meet your baby's basic care needs. The Placement Agreement Meeting may also be a good time for you to let the foster carer know if you wish to bring your own cot, high chair or any other equipment into the placement. Many carers will have equipment you can use in placement if you do not have your own.
- Your personal and self care needs, including mobile phone credit, are also your responsibility. The foster carer will meet all the household bills for the placement. They will discuss with you how your food will be organised, shopping, shared meals etc. Everyone has different ideas and so it helps to be clear at the beginning of the placement what food is available and who prepares it.



# Final Summary

- Your foster carer, the social workers and other professionals involved with you and your baby will actively seek to support you in your placement. This is a real opportunity for you to demonstrate that you can work with the foster carers and the others involved to develop the skills needed to safely care for your baby in the wider community. The social worker will make it very clear to you what changes are needed for such a decision to be made and your progress will be kept under regular review.
- Many parents do go on to safely care for their babies at home after a parent and baby foster placement and we wish you every success in your placement.

