

## 11.8 Supervision of Foster Carers

### SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This procedure applies to all approved foster carers. It details what the foster carer can expect following approval from their supervising social worker. It also covers the supervising social workers role if there is an allegation against the foster carer.

### RELEVANT LEGISLATION, GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

The Children Act 1989 Guidance Volume 4 (2011) Chapter 5

Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, Standard 21

[Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care](#)

[Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England \(2014\) re-issued 2015](#)

### AMENDMENT

In July 2016, [Section 5, Support Provided by the Supervising social worker](#) was updated with a link to Nottinghamshire Fostering Home, (Fronter), a password-protected virtual learning environment which hosts the Foster Carer Handbook.

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### 1. Introduction

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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, ensuring that 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](#) and the agency's policies, procedures and guidance.

However, it is the social worker of the child or children in the foster placement who holds responsibility for specific advice or support in relation to the child and his or her [Care Plan](#) and [Placement Plan](#).

The supervising social worker must also ensure that the foster carers' training and development needs are identified, and that newly approved carers work towards meeting the Children's Workforce Development Standards and gaining the Training, Support and Development Standards Certificate of successful completion. They also have the responsibility to ensure foster carers are familiar and made aware of new policies and guidance.

## 2. Planned Supervision Visits

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

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

- Ensure the foster carers understand how they contribute to the Local Authority's services for children;
- Enable foster carers to contribute effectively to the plans for the children for whom they are caring;
- Provide appropriate monitoring and feedback on the foster carers' work to ensure National Minimum Standards and Training, Support and Development Standards 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 make 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 meeting should cover:

- a. Matters arising from the last supervision;
- b. Personal issues, e.g. effect of a placement on the foster carer's own family;
- c. Child/ren in placement - their health, cultural, educational, leisure and contact needs - and any support needs;
- d. Training/development issues for the foster carers and family;
- e. Safe caring and health and safety issues;
- f. Foster carer's recording which is to be reviewed by the supervising social worker who should sign the foster carers' diary.

The supervision visits should be recorded on a pro forma Foster Carer Supervision Record, signed by the foster carer and the supervising social worker, and should include:

- Any concerns expressed;
- Any support needs expressed by the foster carers and how they will be met;
- Any financial issues.

A record of all meetings should be kept on the foster carers' file and one copy given to the foster carers.

The supervision records will inform the Foster Carer's review - see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#).

## 3. Frequency of Supervision

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Supervision meetings will generally take place on a monthly basis for carers with full time placements.

Additional visits may be made for the purposes of support (to the foster carer or any member of the foster family) with telephone contact at least every four weeks.

In some circumstances it may be agreed between the foster carers, Supervising Social Worker and Team Manager that supervision meetings are held less frequently. This may be because the carer provides support care only or because, for example, the placement is very stable and there have been no concerns for many years. This decision is at the discretion of the Team Manager. Any agreed variation from monthly supervisions MUST be clearly recorded by the authorising Team Manager in case notes and highlighted in the Annual Review.

~~Additional visits may be made for the purposes of support (to the foster carer or any member of the foster family) with telephone contact at least every four weeks.~~

#### **4. Unannounced Visits**

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There should also be unannounced visits at least once a year. The main purpose of the unannounced visit will be to look at the home environment that a child is living in.

The unannounced visits will be undertaken by the foster carers' supervising social worker who will need to check:

- i. Who is in the home;
- ii. Who is looking after the child;
- iii. If the carer is not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the child.

If the foster carers are not at home, the supervising social worker should leave a note for the foster carers to say that s/he has visited.

If the foster carers are not at home but the child 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 should be recorded.

There should not ordinarily be a regular programme of unannounced visits without particular reason - for example if a foster carer is being closely monitored. In such an event the reason for such will be explained to the foster carer.

#### **5. Support Provided by the Supervising social worker**

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Supervising social workers should ensure the following tasks are done:

##### **Post Approval**

1. Ensure that all new carers complete the induction programme and that their support, development and training needs are assessed and met so that they meet the standards and achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards certificate of completion by their first annual review, or soon after if extra support is required;
- ~~2. Give foster carers login details to enable them to access Nottinghamshire's Fostering Home, (Frontier), a password protected virtual learning environment which hosts the Foster Carer Handbook; Fostering and Adoption Portal.~~
- ~~3.2.~~ Give Foster Carer Agreement to the carer: 2 copies to be signed and one returned and placed on the carer's file;
- ~~4.3.~~ Support carers with any specialist issues for disabled children e.g. support in completing applications for Carers' Allowance, Disabled Living Allowance etc.

##### **Pre-Placement**

1. Complete risk assessments surrounding bedroom sharing (each child over 3 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 in

home, etc. Discuss and check equipment (especially in the child's bedroom) and ensure it is appropriate to the age of the child in placement;

2. Take part in discussions about potential placements;
3. Take part in planning meetings regarding placements;
4. Ensure that the child's social worker give the foster family full information about children about to be placed, including a history of abuse or suspected abuse and the reason for the placement, the child's educational, medical, religious, racial, linguistic and cultural needs;
5. Discuss issues relevant to contact with birth parents and other family members;
6. Discuss how child's health needs are promoted and how children should be encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle;
7. Assist carers in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education;
8. Discuss appropriate training to provide appropriate care when caring for children with complex health needs;
9. Assist carer with training needs for appropriate safer care practice, including skills to care for children who have been abused. For foster carers who offer placements to disabled children, this includes training specifically on issues affecting disabled children;
10. Discuss financial issues with the carer: allowances, pocket money, leisure activities, toiletries and travelling etc. and the importance of complying with the terms of the Council's insurance policy for carers;
11. Enquire about holiday plans the carers have made, and if the child is able to join them? If not the carer must inform the child's social worker so alternative arrangements can be made;
12. Ensure that contact details are exchanged including contact numbers for all relevant members of the foster family, as well as the telephone number for out of hours support for the foster family;
13. That arrangements are made for the provision of specialist equipment for disabled children;
14. Set date of first visit after the placement;
15. Let the social worker for a child already in placement know when another child is placed;
16. Provide carers with training and written policy on behaviour management.

#### During Placement

1. Where necessary, check and follow up on all issues raised during the placement. 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;
2. Provide foster carers with breaks from caring as appropriate, which must meet the needs of placed children;
3. Take part in any [Strategy Meetings](#) and [Section 47 Enquiry](#) relating to the foster family. Be involved in interviews/support as agreed;
4. Make every effort to ensure the supervising social worker and the foster carers receive invitations to child's [Looked After Reviews](#) and Child Protection Conferences, and attend when appropriate;
5. Prepare for and attend Foster Carer Review Meetings (See [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#));
6. Ensure training programme is updated and accessed by carers and carers' family and children;
7. Visit regularly in accordance with the Foster Carer's needs, the child's Care Plan and as required, , (See also [Frequency of Supervision \(trix please link to Section 3\)](#) and [Unannounced Visits \(trix please link to Section 4\)](#));
8. Review the Safer Caring Plan and any changes in household circumstances

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7-9. 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:

8-10. Make unannounced visits as required;

9-11. 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;

10-12. Update medicals on the carers every 2 years or as necessary;

11-13. Record contact with carers;

12-14. Provide reports for Panel as required under the relevant procedures;

13-15. Where appropriate contribute to Court Reports as agreed with child's social worker;

14-16. Discuss how the carers can support young people into adulthood.

**At End of Placement**

16. Support the family as much as possible in what can be a very difficult time;
17. Discuss fully with the carer and their family all the issues that have led to any unplanned end of a placement and identify any learning/training opportunities;
18. Assist the foster carer to complete their end of placement report if required;
19. Attend Disruption Meetings as required.

**6. Tasks of Social Worker if Allegations are made Against the Carer**

Where allegations regarding childcare or child protection are made, the supervising social worker should:

1. Support the family;
2. Discuss fully, with the carer and their family, all the issues that have led to the allegation, as agreed at the Strategy Meeting;
3. Make the carers aware of the process and of their rights during any investigation;
4. 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.