



# Kent Fostering Unaccompanied Minor Emergency Bed Scheme

## Integrated Children's Services

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## **Aim**

The purpose of the Unaccompanied Minor Emergency Bed Scheme is to ensure that children under the age of 16 who are newly arrived in Kent are provided with an immediate place of safety until they can move to a different Local Authorities care permanently, usually under the National Transfer Scheme.

In these circumstances it is not possible to provide a specifically matched placement and so these children will be looked after by experienced foster carers, who are willing and have the skills, to provide care and support to children who have experienced trauma because of persecution and harassment due to their/their families political views, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity or ethnicity for example.

This is a temporary scheme and subject to regular review. It is at the discretion of the Fostering Service to withdraw the scheme at any time and without notice.

## **Operation of the Scheme**

The Scheme is jointly operated and managed within the Total Placement Service (TPS) and the Kent Fostering Service.

Where a newly arrived unaccompanied child arrives at the port of Dover and their initial age assessment by the Home Office deems them under 16, TPS or the Out of Hours Service will seek to place the child with a foster carer who has availability under the scheme.

In these circumstances, the Emergency Bed provides the child with a short-term home for up to 10 working days, at which point they are expected to transfer to a different Local Authority without any unnecessary delay or will be found a permanent home and remain a looked after child in Kent. We will strive to adhere to relevant timescales, but these may be exceeded from time to time.

## **Availability and Holiday Allowance**

A central list of available carers who it has been agreed by the Fostering Service can provide care to unaccompanied children under the scheme is held by TPS and the Foster Carers available beds for the scheme will be kept up to date by their Fostering Social Worker. It is expected that foster carers will be available between 8am and 11pm while working under the scheme, with the expectation that children are transferred from their care by their social worker at a reasonable time within those hours and in consideration of the child and the fostering family's needs.

Should foster carer/s circumstances change and they wish to stop providing care under the scheme, they must support the transfer of the last unaccompanied child placed, and inform their Fostering Social Worker and TPS immediately, so that their availability and payments can be changed to reflect this.

All foster carers are entitled to 14 nights (16 nights if Skilled or Advanced Level Carers) holiday payment. Foster carers must request their annual leave in the normal way through their fostering social worker and at least four weeks in advance. The foster carer would not be paid the retainer when taking holiday.

The Fostering Social Worker will confirm with TPS that the foster carer/s is not available to care for unaccompanied children under the scheme throughout their holiday period. This also negates the need for children placed under this scheme to be looked after by a relief or respite carer, who will not necessarily have the knowledge and skill base to care for children about whom very little is known and have experienced trauma because of persecution and harassment.

In the event however that a child placed does not move on as quickly as anticipated and the foster carer is due to take their holiday while the child is still there, alternative care arrangements will be considered on an individual basis.

### **Emergency Bed Carer Placement Capacity**

It is likely that foster carers providing the Emergency Bed provision to unaccompanied children will do so alongside other children placed. It is therefore of utmost importance that the fostering social worker has assessed that the family has the capacity and capability to understand and meet the needs of all children within the home and without the short-term placement of different children in quick succession having a detrimental impact on the other children in placement. The views of all children and their social workers must be sought before agreeing a foster carer provides care under the scheme. Should there be any placement instability, or other concerns regarding the children in care, or birth children, then the Fostering Service reserve the right to withdraw carer/s from the scheme.

Foster Carers can provide care for up to three children at any one time in line with Fostering Regulations and this includes unaccompanied children placed under the scheme. In exceptional circumstances and following robust discussion and assessment by the fostering social worker, where there is confidence that the carers are sufficiently experienced and skilled in managing the competing needs of more than three children and can maintain high levels of safe care, an exemption from the usual fostering limits can be agreed by the relevant Head of Fostering for each new child placed.

### **Accessing the Unaccompanied Minor Emergency Bed Scheme**

To access an emergency bed for a newly arrived unaccompanied minor, a placement plan referral will be completed by a Reception and Safe Care Service (RSCS) Social Worker, for TPS to then search and identify a KCC foster carer for the child, or a carer/s with an independent agency if no in house provision is available. During Out of Hours, access to the Unaccompanied Minor Emergency Beds will fall

to Fostering Out of Hours which operates between 5pm and 11pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 11pm Saturday and Sunday, and the County Out of Hours Service the remainder of the time.

It is agreed that specific matching is a challenge for those children accessing the scheme and placement plans will be brief, based on an initial assessment by a Social Worker who has interviewed the child on arrival at Dover and completed a Unique Unaccompanied Child Record (UUCR). If the interviewing or RSCS social worker becomes aware of any significant information that would be important for the carer/s to know they should alert the placement officer and carers to this as soon as possible.

If the child is placed Out of Hours, the placement referral should be completed on the next working day. In the immediate, a brief overview of the child's needs and any risks, will be shared with the foster carer/s prior to agreeing the placement.

Once a carer/s is identified, the TPS placement officer, foster carer/s, fostering social worker and the RSCS social worker will be informed so that all necessary processes can be implemented for the foster home to be accessed and payments initiated.

Once a child has been linked to the foster carer on the Liberi system, the RSCS social worker is responsible for keeping the network up to date with the arrangements for the child to be transferred to a different Local Authority.

## **Payments**

Foster carers providing care to children under the unaccompanied minor emergency bed scheme receive a retainer payment per week per available bed regardless of having a child in placement, to hold the bed open and be ready for emergencies. The only exception to this is when the carer takes their holiday allowance, they then would not be paid the retainer.

Reward and Maintenance when a child is placed will be paid at the higher rate regardless of the age of the child. This will be paid as a daily rate and according to the period that the child is in placement. As soon as the child leaves placement the daily payments cease.

The assessed and agreed Skills Level payment will be paid to carers in addition to the above.

A one-off emergency payment of £100 will be paid to the foster carers with their first payment for a newly arrived unaccompanied child to help pay for essential clothing and toiletries. A deduction of £10 per week per child placed under the scheme will then be taken from the carer's maintenance and around the child's second week of placement. However, under this scheme, because children should transfer out quite quickly it's likely that very little of this would be reclaimed because when the child moves on the carer's maintenance stops and the child would be taking all those essentials with them.

## Communicable disease

Kent County Council Foster Carers providing care to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children under this scheme are considered at increased risk of contracting Hepatitis B because children are placed in an emergency and at short notice and are unlikely to have had their hepatitis status checked. The Foster Carer should therefore ask their Fostering Social Worker for the letter from the Deputy Designate Doctor for Looked After Children Kent and Medway ICB, requesting that the carers vaccination status is reviewed and they consider the carer/s for the course of Hepatitis vaccine as a priority. This is based on guidance advised by the UK Health Security Agency as per 'The Green Book' that:

*“All short-term foster carers who receive emergency placements, and their families, should be offered immunisation against hepatitis B. Permanent foster carers (and their families) who accept a child known to be infected with hepatitis B should also be offered immunisation.”*

Foster Carers should also keep themselves informed via the NHS website and where necessary by consulting their Health Practitioner/ GP about the risks of undiagnosed infection and how they can minimise the risks of transmission of all blood-borne virus infections.

## Roles, Responsibility and Expectations

### **a) The Unaccompanied Minor Emergency Bed Foster Carer will:**

- Meet all expectations required of mainstream foster carers as outlined within Kent County Council's policy and guidance for fostering (including training and support group attendance).
- Accept all placement referrals based on brief assessment of an unaccompanied child newly arrived to the UK.
- Ensure that the child is provided with the agreed amount of pocket money related to their age, as set out in the KCC's Pocket Money and Savings Policy. It is not anticipated that children placed under the scheme will need savings because they should transfer to a different Local Authority within 10 days or an alternative placement provided by KCC.
- Ensure that the child's immediate physical needs are met by providing appropriate clothing and toiletries to meet their self-care needs.
- Provide all reasonable transport for the child or young person.
- Be available to be contacted and for children to be placed between the hours of 8am and 11pm. In some circumstances and with the agreement of the foster carer/s, placement of unaccompanied children may be made outside of these

hours. Carers should respond to communication within one hour during the daytime hours and 30 minutes from 5pm.

- Maintain daily diary records for the child submitted via The Children's Portal.
- Assist in supporting the transfer of the child to their next identified placement with a different Local Authority or KCC. This may include supporting the child's social worker in explaining plans and support with gathering the child's belongings for the placement move. Carer/s will not be expected to transfer the child.
- Inform TPS and the Fostering Social Worker when the child has transferred to ensure that the carers availability/availabilities for further newly arrived unaccompanied children is updated.

**b) The Total Placement Service (TPS) will:**

- Share all details contained within the referral to support the carer's understanding the needs of child or young person.
- TPS will send a copy of the referral which will provide the carer with all relevant information to familiarise themselves with the child.
- Ensure information regarding risk contained within the referral is highlighted to the carer so they can develop appropriate safe care planning.
- Ensure that the foster carer's payments are promptly set up and ended to limit delay and / or avoid overpayment.
- Ensure the FSW is updated so that they can provide the Emergency Bed foster carer with necessary support to meet the needs of the child.

**c) The Reception & Safe Care Service Social Worker / Out of Hours Social Worker will:**

- Transport the child to the foster carer/s and onto their next identified placement. This is not the role of the foster carer.
- Attend any placement arrangements discussions and contribute with any information that will support the Foster Carer in caring for the child or young person.
- Coordinate and arrange for additional support as considered necessary and appropriate.
- Ensure that the child is visited at least once during their stay of up to 10 days or more frequently if the transfer to another local authority area takes longer.
- Maintain good communication with the Foster Carer, TPS and the Fostering social worker regarding the child's transfer.

**d) The Fostering Social Worker will:**

- Provide 4 to 6 weekly supervision to the foster carer and additional visits or support calls where necessary, in accordance with the needs of the foster carers and the children in placement.

- Identify training that will develop the foster carer's knowledge and skillset of caring for unaccompanied children.
- Facilitate a Placement Arrangements discussion with the foster carer/s and social worker within five days of the placement being made. It is agreed that this can take place virtually and will be brief given the nature of the scheme.
- Ensure that there is a robust Fostering Family Safe Care Plan in place to ensure that carer/s practice in a way that accounts for the safety and wellbeing of all children living with them and is vigilant about how everyone's safety will be maintained when there are different children coming to live in the home in quick succession and little information is known about them.
- Provide to the foster carer/s details of the Unaccompanied Child Asylum Seeking Support Groups held across the county should the carer/s wish to attend.

**e) The County Out of Hours (OOH) Service will:**

- Provide full information that is available regarding a child being placed to support the foster carer in safe care planning. This information will be shared via telephone if Fostering OOH support has ended. The information available will also be sent to the foster carer via email if needed.
- If a child is placed out of hours, then the county OOH social worker will support with placing the child or young person.
- Foster carers will have access to the County OOH number to report a child or young person missing – providing full CAD number from the Police and any other known information about the child or young person. Foster carers will contact County OOH to inform the service if a child is missing or has returned to the foster home.
- When a placement is made by County OOH a placement plan will be initiated and reassigned to TPS within 24 hours. An email will also be sent to TPS referrals to inform them that a placement has been made with the foster carer. This will also include any information regarding agreed Out of Approvals or Exemptions.