

Kent County Council

Parent & Child Fostering Arrangements Policy

Kent Fostering Service



Help support a parent and their child by fostering them together in your home and guide them towards a strong future.

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2	June 2023	General updating, addition of payment information for two parents, more than one child in arrangement, additional holiday payment rules, if carer does not take break, day care payments, benefits & expectations of professional team.	Carla Wilkinson

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1. Introduction

A Parent and Child Fostering Arrangement is when a parent(s) and their child(ren) live with foster carer(s). This usually happens when it would be unsafe for a parenting capacity assessment to take place in the parent's own home.

These arrangements are intended for children under the age of two years and one parent to live in the fostering household (although may involve two parents, siblings or slightly older children in exceptional circumstances), where it has either been identified that the threshold criteria for significant harm is or is likely to be met, or a vulnerable teenage parent (who may or may not be Looked After) and their baby need a supportive arrangement to promote parenting capacity.

The arrangements have a key role in care planning for babies, particularly where intensive observation, supervision, support and guidance in parenting skills within a family environment, is likely to lead to positive outcomes for children.

The Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements Policy ensures Integrated Children's Services works in accordance with legislation, national policy and guidance, in this often-complex area of practice. It aims to ensure that everyone involved in parent and child fostering arrangements have the same understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the legal framework that underpin these.

This policy should be implemented following:

- Pre-birth assessment which recommends a parent and child arrangement (including where a child in care becomes pregnant and the plan is for them to remain) or;
- Children's Child Protection Conference or Children and Family assessment which recommends a parent and child arrangement; or
- At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings

2. Legal Framework

The primary legislation under which Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements fall are **The Children Act 1989** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>, **The Children Act 2004** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>, **The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/contents/made> and **2013** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/984/contents/made>, **The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011** <http://legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/made>; alongside the principles as set out in **The Fostering National Minimum Standards**

2011 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf and **The Public Law Outline 2014.**

There are four scenarios that apply to parent and child arrangements:

- ***Arrangement where the parent is not Looked After and the child is Looked After***

In this situation the parent could be either under or over the age of 18. If under 18 the local authority will have assessed but not identified the parent as a 'child in need'. The parent is therefore not subject to the Regulations. The child will be placed with the foster carer(s) as a Looked After Child and the Regulations apply to them.

- ***Arrangement where both the parent and child are Looked After***

Where the child becomes 'Looked After' because of meeting threshold for significant harm and the parent is under 18 and already Looked After by the Local Authority, both will be placed in accordance with the provisions of S22 of the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority will provide a foster placement to both in line with the Care Planning and Fostering Regulations.

- ***Arrangement where the parent is Looked After and the child is not Looked After***

During Care Proceedings it could be that the child of a parent under the age of 18 is placed with them, in a foster placement, under the Care Planning, Placements and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Placement of child in care with parent). The Fostering Regulations (2011) will apply to the fostering household.

- ***Arrangement where neither the parent nor the child are 'Looked After'***

Where the Local Authority plans to assess parenting capacity in the context of support provided to the family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or pre care proceedings, the parent must agree to the parent and child fostering arrangement. The Fostering Regulations (2011) will apply to the fostering household.

With all the above arrangements the Local Authority will be satisfied that the parent and child arrangement will not impact unduly on the foster carer's responsibilities towards other children in placement. Any necessary, appropriate support should be provided to enable the arrangements to succeed. The social work team for any other children in placement must be consulted and their views considered when matching for a parent and child arrangement.

3. Finance

There are two tiers of payment for parent and child fostering arrangements as follows:

Enhanced: any situation when the parent or child (or both) is looked after and there is an assessment being undertaken.

Standard: any situation where neither parent nor child is looked after, or where the parent is looked after and the child is not and the focus is parenting support.

These payments reflect the living costs of parent and child living as part of the fostering household, alongside the impact of having another adult living as part of the foster family unit. The enhanced payment reflects the additional complexities and assessment required in these types of arrangements and the knowledge, skills and expertise required of the carer(s), usually where a child's welfare and safety are being considered by the court.

Where there are two parents in the arrangement, maintenance and reward for a child 16+ will be paid in addition to the above.

Where there are two or more children in the arrangement, maintenance and reward for each child commensurate with their age will be paid.

Payment for skills: Foster carers who have met the criteria to receive Skilled (Level 2) or Advanced (Level 3) of 'Payment for Skills' will receive additional payments integrated into their reward payment for every parent and child living as part of the arrangement.

Holiday payment: Foster carer(s) in receipt of the enhanced parent and child payment, are entitled to two weeks holiday allowance at the end of each arrangement of 12 weeks or more additional to the 14 nights (16 if Skilled or Advanced Level Carers) all foster carers are entitled to. This is in recognition of the intensiveness of work required in these arrangements and a break only being permitted in the duration of a parent and child arrangement in exceptional circumstances. Foster Carers are encouraged to take this break to keep healthy and give time and space to prepare for their next arrangement. However, if they choose not to take the additional break, the additional holiday allowance will not be paid.

Day Care: The foster carer is entitled to eight hours day care per week for the parent/s and child(ren) they are looking after for the duration of the arrangement. The expectation is that an appropriately matched Kent foster carer is identified at the placement planning/arrangements meeting to provide this. This is to support foster carers personal and professional development. This is paid at the day care rate per adult and child eg. 1 parent and 1 child will be 2 x day care rate.

Current payment rates are available at <https://www.kentfostering.co.uk/how-to-foster/payments>.

Additional financial considerations

Parent's benefits: In the majority of parent and child fostering arrangements the parent will be in receipt of Universal Credit and they are expected to use those benefits to provide for themselves and their child (clothing, nappies, formula/food etc). This is an essential part of any arrangement because parents need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their budgeting skills and ability to place their child's needs above their own. The level of Universal Credit may differ depending on the individual circumstances of the parent. For those receiving Universal Credit and living with foster carers in receipt of the enhanced parent and child payment, a reduction in the foster carers' maintenance fee equivalent to the income support personal allowance for a lone parent over 18, will be made.

Should a parent not be in receipt of Universal Credit (including those with no recourse to public funds), discussion and agreement needs to be reached at the Placement Arrangements Meeting (at the latest) about how the foster carer will support the parent to finance looking after themselves and their child and how monies will be spent, while a claim is made. Foster Carers will be expected to finance this from their maintenance for the child equivalent to the Income Support personal allowance for a lone parent over 18. When the backdated Universal Credit is paid a discussion should take place between the parent, foster carer/s and social workers to agree on how this should be spent / saved (e.g furnishing parent's property, paying off debt).

Savings & pocket money: If the parent and/or child is Looked After the foster carer will pay pocket money and savings in line with current policy.

Children under 5 years do not currently receive pocket money. All children and young people in the care of Kent County Council are entitled to have £10 per week saved on their behalf from their 14th week in care and continuing throughout their period being looked after. These savings are collected at the source of the foster carer's maintenance payment.

4. Placement Request

The process for requesting a parent and child fostering arrangement will be via the Liberi Placement Plan and follow the same procedure as for any placement request to the Total Placement Service (TPS). This is completed by the child's social worker.

Any risks that the parent/associated person or child may pose to the foster family, including the results of their PNC Check, must be included in the placement plan risk assessment, along with the objectives of the arrangement, expected outcomes and timeframe for assessment.

Any such Risk Assessment will include specific considerations if the parent is subject to a drug and/or alcohol treatment program, has a learning disability or support needed for mental health.

All information (i.e. pre-birth assessment, risk assessment, conference minutes) should be made available to help ensure good and safe matching. Failure to do so could result in delay in an arrangement starting, poor outcomes for the child and safeguarding considerations not being suitably managed.

5. Placement Planning

In all parent and child arrangements a placement planning meeting will take place before the arrangement starts.

Clarification needs to be given as to the expectations of the foster carer:

- Level of observation, supervision, no intervention, intervention, modelling, any specific focus/tasks that require assistance etc
- The parent - house rules, supervised/unsupervised care of child, contact with others outside of the foster family, how Parental Responsibility will be exercised, contact arrangements for other family members.
- Other professionals or partner agencies relevant to the parent and child arrangement e.g. Health visitor, mid wife etc. This will ensure that the best guidance and support is provided from the outset of the arrangement.

Parent and child arrangements should normally be agreed for a maximum of 12 weeks assessment, with consideration about how the foster carer(s) can be available to support parent and child following the 12 weeks. Agreement should be reached about how progress towards meeting the objectives of the arrangement will be monitored and the plan should the arrangement need to end.

A review of the placement plan should be held at six weeks to revisit roles and responsibilities and clarify any changes. If an assessment is likely to extend beyond 12 weeks, agreement should be given by the Area Service Manager for the child, with clear reasons why this is in the child's best interests. This will prevent drift and enhance decision making.

6. Expectations

The following expectations of the foster carer(s), parent, child's social worker and fostering social worker are specific to parent and child fostering arrangements and in addition to all usual good practice expected when a child(ren) is placed in foster care.

The Foster Carer(s)

A secure attachment will be promoted between child and parent.

Promote parent's independent living skills.

Daily diary records will be kept including observations of the parent's ability to respond to their child's needs (physical, emotional, developmental), manage routine, manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting, relationships, external stressors etc. These will be uploaded to Liberi via the portal.

Diary records should be shared with the parent in the most appropriate way and opportunity to discuss strengths and areas for improvement given.

24hour support when required and transport for the parent and child when appropriate and as agreed.

Babysitting / childcare (i.e. for parental planned appointments or safeguarding reasons) as agreed in the placement planning meeting.

A fully furnished bedroom complete with bed for the parent, Moses basket/cot for the baby, adequate storage etc. The parent should have use of a sitting room with home entertainment and baby will have toys and all necessary equipment for inside and out of the home. If the parent has their own equipment, this should be checked by the foster carer as suitable, safe and hygienic for the child. A Health and Safety Assessment will be undertaken to ensure the home meets relevant safety requirements for a child under 5.

Intervention if the foster carer(s) consider the child is at risk from a parent in any given moment. This will be communicated to the child and fostering social workers as soon as is practical and recorded in diary notes as a significant event.

Should the placement end in an unplanned way, the child should remain with the foster carer for an agreed period if safe to do so. This is to give the team around the child adequate time to put different plans in place for the child if necessary and limit the amount of disruption the child could experience from any unnecessary moves. The exception to this would be where the parent is Looked After, and the child is not. In this circumstance it might be more appropriate for the parent to remain in their existing foster placement and alternative care be identified for their child (which may or may not be foster care dependent on legal status).

Respite should not be taken by the Foster Carer for the duration of a parent and child arrangement, unless in exceptional circumstances (emergency or agreed for specific reasons prior to arrangement starting) and with clear agreement with the professional team.

A 'memory box' for the child will be undertaken by the foster carer with the parent and arrangements made for copies of all the information and photographs to be kept for the parent.

Parent's circumstances and history to be kept confidential to the named foster carer(s) and not their families or friends.

The Parent

Always care, respond, supervise and ensure their child's safety (with / without foster carer supervision and support) as agreed in placement planning meeting.

Manage their child's routine taking account of the fostering household routines and as agreed at the placement planning meeting.

Always give foster carer access to their child and their room, in order that safety, care and welfare can be properly monitored.

Budget, shop and cook for themselves and their child; attend to own and child's washing and ironing; and clean own room.

Ensure any areas of the home they use are tidied/cleaned as appropriate after use.

Be respectful and demonstrate acceptable behaviour to all members of the fostering family and their visitors.

Be responsible for personal clothing and belongings.

Smoking must not be inside the foster home, but in an area outside designated by the foster carer. Hands to be washed before contact with child and remove coats worn when smoking.

The parents must not provide care or supervision to other children in the foster home.

No alcohol or illegal substances to be used or kept by the parent in the carer's home.

Parent will discuss any time foster carers need to look after the child with plenty of notice.

Parents over the age of 18 will be subject to Police National Computer (PNC) checks prior to any arrangement starting and Disclosure and Barring Service Checks must be undertaken as quickly as possible to ensure that all adults in the fostering

household have these in place. This is particularly so for foster carers whose approval includes looking after other children alongside parent and child.

Fostering Social Worker

All Parent and Child foster carers will be supervised and supported by the lead social worker/senior practitioner for Parent and Child fostering in their area.

To ensure that the placement plan, including risk assessment, is shared with the Foster Carer(s) before the arrangement starts.

To supervise and support the foster family and ensure access to support groups and training specific to the parent and child tasks, in line with current fostering policy (this will include a schedule of visits with the child's Social Worker as agreed in the Placement Planning Meeting).

To jointly visit the foster carer and parent with the child's social worker should a dispute in the arrangement arise.

Their role and responsibilities will be in accordance with all expectations of managing a foster placement (unannounced visits, safe care plan etc)

Child's Social Worker

To ensure the foster carer has all the relevant information/paperwork at the outset of the arrangement.

Ensure that detailed information regarding the purpose, needs and proposed length of the arrangement are clearly evidenced within the placement referral. This should also include details of payments and benefits received by parents.

To regularly review the arrangement in line with agreement at the Placement Planning Meeting considering progress, planning and timescales.

To discuss with the parent and carer, individually and jointly what is working well and what are the worries in the arrangement, liaising with the Fostering Social Worker as necessary.

To carry out any assessment required in respect of the parent, informed by the recorded observations of the foster carer, in line with Court timetable.

To consider the second parent, with attention and scrutiny given to parental relationships, assessment of risk and future planning.

To jointly visit the foster carer and parent with the fostering social worker should a dispute in the arrangement arise.

To work with the parent and relevant housing authorities to ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the parent (and child) to move into when the

fostering arrangement ends. This includes liaising with the benefits agency (and senior childrens service management if necessary), to secure the parents tenancy on a property in the community that they are in receipt of housing benefit for, if the fostering arrangement is likely to continue past 13 weeks. The ending of a parent and child fostering arrangement should not be delayed because of housing difficulties.

To provide parent(s) with the parent and child fostering arrangements information leaflet.

To provide parent(s) with the complaint's procedures leaflet.

To provide parent and carer(s) with an alternative point of contact for any period of annual leave over a week. This will help to ensure consistent and proper oversight of assessment and support and timely response to any worries that may arise.

Where the outcome of the parent and child fostering arrangement is for rehabilitation of the parent and child to the community Social Worker to liaise with the Fostering Social Worker, Foster Carer and any other relevant agencies to co-ordinate support. This includes discussion and agreement of the foster carer(s) role and responsibility during the initial rehabilitation period and a clear timeframe for their involvement. This is necessary to enable the foster carer(s) and Fostering Service to consider availability for other parent and child arrangements.

Parent Looked After

Both the child's social worker and foster carer's social worker, along with the foster carer, must ensure that all the expectations are met of working with a Looked After Child where this is the parent. This includes proper placement planning and reviewing for both, individual safe care plans, their specific contact needs and the level of care and support required.

7. Additional considerations

In some circumstances it may be considered appropriate for a parent to look after their child in the foster carers home throughout the day, returning to their own home at night, with the child remaining with the foster carer(s). Such an arrangement requires Service Manager authorisation and as with any parent and child arrangement, very clear placement planning and review.