



Kent County Council

Kent Fostering Emergency Bed Scheme Policy for Children and Young People in Care

Kent Fostering Service

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Version 2	January 2023
Approved	16/01/23: Caroline Smith, Assistant Director Corporate Parenting
Review Date	January 2026

Version Control

Version No	Date Issued	Summary of changes	Author
2	Jan 2023	Change/addition of rota times of E Beds, payments info condensed	Fostering Team Manager, Stacey Waters

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Aim

The purpose of the Emergency Bed Scheme is to ensure that children and young people, 0-17 years old, are provided with an immediate place of safety when an appropriately matched placement cannot be identified for them. These children and young people will be supported by a skilled, Emergency Bed Foster Carer at a time of crisis to ensure their needs are met, whilst they are in their care.

Operation of the Scheme

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

The scheme provides a short-term solution for a child or young person who requires a home in emergency circumstances such as:

- A child or young person being made subject to Police Protection.
- A family breakdown where no alternative placement can be identified.
- A foster care or residential home breakdown where the young person cannot return to or remain in, due to the level of risk.
- A newly arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person aged under 16 years old who is subject to Children's Services intervention.
- A young person who has been arrested or has bail conditions which prevent a return to their current home.

In these circumstances, the Emergency Bed provides the child or young person with a short-term home for **up to** 10 working days. These timescales enable the Children's Social Work Team the opportunity to develop planning, risk assessments and a placement plan referral to support further searches for a permanent home or return to family.

This interim provision can be extended in **exceptional circumstances** which could include:

- The child's identified placement is not immediately available.
- Continued searches for a home are required as there continues to be no alternative placement for the child or young person.
- Additional work needs to be completed with family before a rehabilitation home is possible.

Any extension must be authorised by the Service Manager for the Total Placement Service (TPS) after consultation with the Fostering Support Team. These situations are dealt with on a "case by case" basis following careful consultation with the foster carer, TPS, Children's Team and Fostering Support Team.

Rota & Annual Leave

The Emergency Bed Foster Carers operate on a rota basis that is managed by TPS. Each carer is on rota for a period of 6 weeks, followed by two weeks off rota. The rota is completed for a 12-month period in advance and is developed to ensure there is always an Emergency Bed Foster Carer available. It is expected that the foster carer's start time on rota is from 12pm and ends at 12pm on the last day of their rota, with the expectation that children are moved from Emergency Bed Foster Carers by their social worker at 11am.

It is recognised that there will be times when foster carer's experience unexpected circumstances, such as ill health or other personal issues. In these circumstances it is the foster carer's responsibility to alert their FSW at the earliest opportunity so that any decisions to place emergency beds on hold can be factored into the provision available. In these circumstances there will no payment for the on-hold bed/s.

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 through their allocated FSW at least 4 weeks in advance. Once the request is received the allocated FSW will liaise with TPS to confirm the request can be accommodated. Any other additional periods of time required off rota will have to be requested at least 3 weeks in advance. This provides the Fostering Service the opportunity to ensure that this period is covered with another Emergency Bed Foster Carer, optimising available provision.

Emergency Bed Carer placement capacity

The Emergency Bed Scheme is a specialist placement, supporting children in times of crisis, and often requiring the foster carer to manage a significant level of risk. It is therefore advised that a foster carer provides a maximum of two emergency beds.

Ideally, a single placement would be preferred, to ensure that all needs can be met and requirements achieved. However, it is recognised that a foster carer could support and manage the risks of two young people if appropriate matching takes place. In these circumstances, it is important that the foster carer and FSW continually review and assess whether the fostering household can meet the needs of two young people.

There may be circumstances where it is assessed that a child's needs or presenting behaviours require a solo placement. Any decision to "block" a second Emergency Bed in these circumstances is made by the Service Manager for TPS after careful consideration of the presenting risk factors surrounding a child or young person and

the complexity of their needs and behaviour. In these circumstances payment will be made for the blocked bed/s.

In some circumstances, foster carers providing the Emergency Bed provision may do so alongside other children placed with them on a long-term basis. When families already have fostered children in placement, it should be carefully assessed whether providing an Emergency Bed scheme will have a detrimental impact on the other children in placement, considering the children's views and that of their social worker. The scheme should only be agreed if other children are settled and stable. Should there be any placement instability, or other concerns regarding the children in care, or birth children, then the Fostering Support Team reserve the right to place Emergency Beds on hold, in the children's best interests.

Accessing the Emergency Bed Scheme

To access the Emergency Bed, the allocated social worker will complete a placement plan referral and submit to TPS. TPS will explore placements internally and externally. Where a placement is required as a matter of urgency and a placement is not identified by 2.30pm on the search day, a decision will be made by the Service Manager of TPS regarding accessing the Emergency Bed provision. Once this decision is made the TPS placement officer, foster carer, and the child's 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 children's allocated social worker will complete an additional placement referral to ensure that new searches can commence for a placement. This must be completed within 48 hours of the placement commencing to avoid delays in further placement searches.

During Out of Hours (between 17.00pm – 08.30am, Monday – Friday, or weekends and bank holidays) the decision to access the Emergency Bed provision will fall to the relevant manager for County Out of Hours (OOH) Service.

It is recognised that placements are sometimes required out of hours, or late in the working day and therefore the opportunity to provide the placement referral is limited. If an Emergency Bed placement of a child is made by County OOH Service, it is expected that they provide the foster carer with the most recent assessment of need and any risks to ensure they have a level of information to adequately meet the needs of the child and develop an appropriate safe care plan.

If the child is placed by TPS late in a business day and there is no capacity for a referral to be completed on the day of placement, this must be completed on the next working day. In the immediate, a brief overview as to why the placement is required,

the child's needs and any risks, will be submitted by the Children's Social Work Team to be shared with the foster carer prior to agreeing the placement.

Payments & additional support

Foster carers receive a retainer payment for six weeks on rota regardless of having a child / young person in placement, to hold the bed open and be ready for emergencies 24 hours a day. They also receive the retainer payment for the two weeks off rota.

Additional Payments, 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 or young person is in placement. As soon as the child leaves placement the daily payments cease.

Complex needs enhanced payment

Emergency Bed foster carers are requested at times to provide a placement for children or young people whose care plan requires a more specialised environment to meet their holistic needs (i.e., residential care). When such placements are required, it is recognised that foster carers are managing a significantly higher level of risk and this will be rewarded with a complex need enhanced payment assessed and agreed by the Service Manager in TPS.

There may be circumstances where the complex enhanced payment is not agreed at the start of the placement, but as the placement progresses the presenting needs and behaviours of the child become more complex. In these circumstances the foster carer, FSW, TPS and Children's Team will review whether complex enhanced payment is required to better support the foster carer in meeting the needs of the child or young person.

Foster carers who provide an Emergency Bed provision will also receive their assessed and agreed Skill Level payment. Foster carers, as part of their annual review and registration, are required to attend a certain level of training and support group attendance. This can be difficult for Emergency Bed foster carers due to the nature of the scheme. In recognition of this, Day Care support of 6 hours per month will be provided. Emergency Bed foster carers must provide their FSW with the name of the identified foster carer providing the day care to ensure appropriate matching. If it is not considered a match due to the risks presented by the young person an additional carer will need to be identified or a decision that the training or Support Group is missed that day.

It is expected that foster carers will attend training during the two weeks that they are not on rota. There is also a recognition that at times the one-off training is sourced by

the Fostering Service. In such circumstances, if relevant to the carer's training and development requirements, the Fostering Service will support with providing day care support to enable the carer to attend.

Roles, responsibility & expectations

a) The 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.
- Ensure that they develop their skills and knowledge in caring for children and young people in crisis or at risk of exploitation and harm.
- Complete at least 2 face to face training, 4 e-learning training and a minimum of 5 support groups per year.
- Accept all placement referrals based on a risk assessment completed by the children's social worker. It is expected that all referrals for children will be accepted unless:
 - i) there is a factual and current risk around fire setting. This includes previous episodes of starting fires and/or that the behaviour of the young person is known to include carrying matches and lighters or where they have made threats that detail the use of fire.
 - ii) the child or young person has a lengthy and recent history of violence to adults or carers and this risk is deemed medium or high, then careful consideration to accepting the referral is expected. It is recommended that there is discussion with the foster carer, FSW and the child's social worker as to how the risk may be mitigated and whether the placement should proceed.
 - iii) the child or young person is currently subject to high levels of staffing supervision. It must be considered that foster carers provide care within a family home and should not be expected to provide waking nights, or 24-hour supervision or a child, that would usually be provided by a team of residential staff or a hospital setting.All other referrals are to be accepted.
- 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. If the child has been in care for more than 13 weeks, then savings will be automatically taken at source.
- Ensure that the child's immediate physical needs are met by providing appropriate clothing and toiletries to meet their self-care needs, should they not have access to this. Should additional items be required then further support should be explored at the placement arrangements meeting discussions.

- Provide all reasonable transport for the child or young person. This includes attending school, within a 20-mile radius, attending any appointments specific to the child or young person and supporting Family Time.
- Be available to be contacted 24 hours a day when on rota. However, it is understood that foster carers have appointments and other commitments. Therefore, carers should respond to communication within 1 hour during the daytime hours and 30 minutes from 17.00pm.
- Maintain daily records and provide a narrative of the child/young person within two days of child/young person being placed to support placement searches and an end of placement summary to the FSW, children's social worker and TPS via email at the end of the child or young person's placement.
- Where appropriate, assist in supporting the transition of the young person to their next identified placement, or return home. This may include supporting the child's social worker in explaining plans and support with gathering the child's belongings for the placement move.
- Inform their allocated FSW and TPS when the child has moved placement to ensure that availability is updated regarding the Emergency Bed.

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.
- If requested by the allocated children's social worker, TPS will also send the foster carer the delegated authority for the child, if a child is subject to a care order, to meet the child's needs. If the child is subject to section 20 accommodation, TPS will ensure that they inform the child's social worker to provide signed consent by the child's parents for the carer to meet the child's needs.
- If the child is not newly received into care when accessing the Emergency Bed, TPS will, if provided by the allocated social worker, send the child's last child in care review minutes and the last medical to support and inform care of the child. If the child is accessing the Emergency Bed direct from their birth family, TPS will provide the Emergency Bed carer with information contained within the KCC Liberi system that has been sent to them by the child's social worker.
- Ensure that once a placement is agreed, the foster carer's payments are promptly set up to limit any delay. TPS will also ensure that once a child

leaves an Emergency Bed provision, payments are ended promptly to limit any overpayment issues.

- Ensure good communication with the foster carer regarding progress of potential placements or moves before the end of the 10 days. This also includes updating the foster carer if an Emergency Bed provision is no longer required, or alternatively if an extension for a current child is needed.
- 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 Child's Social Worker will:

- Transport the child to the Emergency Bed Placement and onto their next identified placement or return to family. This is not the role of the Emergency Bed 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 or Young Person is visited at least once during their Emergency Bed stay.
- Maintain good communication with the Foster Carer, TPS and the FSW regarding plans for the Child or Young Person's next placement.

d) The Emergency Bed Fostering Social Worker/Support Team will:

- Provide 4 weekly supervision to the Emergency Bed 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 specific to the Emergency Bed scheme.
- Facilitate a Placement Arrangements meeting discussion with the foster carer and social worker as soon as reasonably possible after a placement is made.
- Ensure that there is a robust Emergency Bed Safe Care Plan in place to ensure safeguarding areas are considered in meeting the needs of the children/young people.
- Facilitate a virtual Emergency Bed Support Group and an Emergency Bed WhatsApp Group with the purpose of providing information to carers and providing a forum to seek support and guidance.
- Provide Fostering OOH support from 17.00pm – 23.00pm on weekdays and 9.00am – 23.00pm weekends and bank holidays. County OOH support will be provided between 23.00pm through to 8.30am to ensure 24-hour support.

d)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 Emergency Bed foster carer via email if needed.
- If a child is placed in an Emergency Bed 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. An email will also be sent to TPS referrals to inform them that a placement has been made with an Emergency Bed foster carer. This will also include any information regarding agreed Out of Approvals or Exemptions.