

**Fostering
with Trafford**



Trafford Council Foster Carer Handbook

October 2019

Fostering
Think you can't? Think again.



Welcome!

Welcome to Trafford's Fostering Service Handbook. This handbook should be used as a guide alongside Trafford's Policies and Procedures.

The aim of this handbook is to assist you in your role as Foster Carers and we hope that you will find this book an invaluable source of information on matters relating to fostering.

As Foster Carers you make a real difference to the lives of children and young people, offering a family for children who really need one. As a Local Authority we want to ensure that we provide the best possible service to both children and young people in foster care and to you as a Foster Carer. To do this we also need to provide you as a Foster Carer with a high level of information and support.

This Handbook and all our policies and procedures are also available on the internet via Website address.

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/information-for-approved-foster-carers.aspx>

Contents

- Foster Carers Charter
- Everyday Living
- The Law and Fostering
- Information about Fostering
- Support and Supervision of Foster Carers
- Foster Carer reviews
- Contact

- Education

- Health of Children Looked After

- Preparing for Independence

- Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers

- Missing From Care Guidance

- Moving children on

- Moving children on to adoptive families

Trafford Council Foster Carer Charter

Trafford Council's Foster Carer Charter sets out what is expected from the Trafford Children, Families and Wellbeing Directorate in terms of the services and support provided to all of its approved Foster Carers, both General Carers and Connected Persons Carers. The Charter also sets out what is expected from Foster Carers approved by the service.

Access to our Foster Carer's Charter can be accessed via the following link

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/docs/Foster-Carers-Charter.pdf>

Everyday Living

Children and Young People's Wishes and Feelings

As a foster carer you will need to listen very hard to young people's wishes and feelings. They may tell you how they feel in words or they may show you with their behaviour. It is important that they know you are listening and that they can see that their views are taken into account when plans and decisions are made.

It is important for children and young people who are looked after to be able to influence the way in which children's social care services in Trafford are delivered to them. This can be in small individual meetings like Child Looked After Reviews or in bigger ways through the Children in Care Council (CICC). The CICC representative may get in touch with the children in your care from time to time to encourage them to talk about their experiences and to make sure they are listened to. She/he can visit young people or they can go to CICC meetings.

Advocacy

It can be hard for young people who are looked after to speak up for themselves. As their foster carer you will need to speak up for them at times but it may be useful to have someone more independent involved.

In Trafford there is a Children's Rights Service which provides a service to help young people who are looked after to have their say and to make sure that their voice is heard. If a young person you are caring for feels that he or she would like to contact them details can be found via the following link.

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/complaints/independent-advice-and-advocacy.aspx>

Alternatively, you, or the young person, could ask your supervising social worker or the young person's social worker to contact the Children's Rights Service.

Safer Caring

When you are approved you will agree and sign a safer caring policy to help to manage the risk of caring for a child in your own home. This is to keep the child safe from harm and to help reduce the risk of misunderstandings, allegations or complaints.

Every child who is placed with you should have a risk assessment and you will need to amend your safer caring policy with your Supervising Social Worker according to these risks.

Full details and guidance around Safer Caring can be accessed via the following link

Foster Carer Support Networks

The Fostering Standards 2011 focus on the foster carer as being a "reasonable parent" and making decisions on this basis about other people who can look after children occasionally for short periods of time. If you know of a suitable person who you would like to use regularly to have sole charge of a child in care then a DBS check would be good practice.

People within foster carers support networks should always be made aware of the Behaviour Management Policy and should understand that no young person must be subject to any form of corporal punishment or other inappropriate treatment i.e. smacking and sanctions on food/drink.

It should be noted that there may be an occasion where a foster carer is unable to use a member of their support network who has a DBS check because of an emergency or the unavailability. In such circumstances a non-vetted sitter can be used. If a non-vetted person is used the foster carer must inform both the fostering service and the child's social worker within 24 hours.

All members of a foster carers support network should be known to the child prior to any alternative child care arrangements, whether such arrangements are planned or in an emergency.

Where alternative child care arrangements are required overnight in the foster carer's home, this should be discussed in advance with your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker. In such circumstances the carer should use a member of their support network who has a DBS check and be satisfied that the arrangement is safe and the alternative carer suitably responsible.

It may be that another foster carer may be able to help or even a reciprocal arrangement made. The alternative carer should always know how long the carer plans to be absent and it is the responsibility of the foster carer to provide written contact details for emergencies.

The foster carer should choose people in their support network who share their own standards and approach to looking after children. The alternative carer must agree to maintain confidentiality about the child and should be informed about the child's routine, any behaviour management issues and likes and dislikes. The proposed frequency of any alternative child care arrangements must take account of the child's needs. For example, some children may be adversely affected by frequent changes in routine and this must be considered when arrangements are made.

Choosing your Support Network

When choosing your support network consideration should be given to the following in relation to an individual child:

- How long the child has been in placement
- How well the child knows the proposed alternative carer
- The age and experience of the proposed alternative carer
- The complexity of the child's needs
- How vulnerable the child is, including any factors as outlined within the child's behaviour management plan
- Any risks the child may pose, including any factors as outlined within the child's risk assessment
- The child's own wishes and feelings
- The views of the child's parents (if appropriate)
- Any health needs of the child

Costs for Using Alternative Carers

Foster carers will be expected to pay for alternative child care arrangements which are made for their own leisure or social arrangements.

Overnight Stays

Decisions on overnight stays with friends or sleepovers for the child or young person, should normally be taken by foster carers. The arrangements for such decisions should be written into the Delegated Authority Checklist, Placement Information Record, Care Plan or Foster Placement Agreement. Children and young people should, wherever possible, be granted the same permissions as would other children/young people in the community, to take part in normal and acceptable age appropriate activities.

Judgements should be based on a reasonable assessment of risks. However, it is expected that as foster carers you get to know the child in placement well before allowing overnight stays and also the family/friend with whom they intend to stay.

The child's social worker and parents should also be consulted as to the appropriateness of this. It may be more appropriate to invite a child's friend to stay at your home if you are unsure about them sleeping over.

Where a young person aged under 16 wishes to stay overnight at the home of a boyfriend or girlfriend it will be his or her social worker who will make the decision.

Any concerns about agreed overnight stays should be referred immediately to the child's social worker.

Haircuts

Foster carers may give permission for a child or young person to have their hair cut if authority has been delegated to them on the Delegated Authority checklist or in discussion with the Child's Social Worker or parent.

Life Story Work

Foster Carers will be asked to help the children they are caring for collect photos and mementoes together in a memory box. Each child in placement should have a memory box. Your supervising social worker or the child's social worker will help you with this. We will reimburse you up to £10 for each child for each memory box you purchase.

Some carers will be asked to help a child put together a Life story Book.

Some suggestions for the contents of the book are:

- Birth certificate or a photocopy. Information about the child's birth,
- photograph of birth hospital
- Photographs of birth parents, siblings, extended family and any details and information available
- An explanation of why the child is separated from his/her family
- Information about visits with birth parents
- A flow chart to help clarify the moves and changes in the child's life
- Photographs of previous foster carers
- Photographs of favourite activities, holidays, birthday and Christmas
- Anything else which the child feels is important

Information about Life Story work can be obtained from the child's social worker or your supervising social worker.

Belongings

Foster children may arrive at the home of a foster carer with items of clothing, toys or other possessions which do not seem very valuable. These possessions are the child's link with their separated family and will be important to them – they should be treated with respect and foster carers should make sure that these, and other possessions, move with the child to any other placement. Photographs are particularly important. Your supervising social worker or the child's social worker will provide luggage for children placed with you. It is important, whatever the circumstances under which a child leaves, that their belongings are moved in

appropriate suitcases or holdalls. In no circumstances, should a child move with their belongings in bin bags or similar containers.

Valuing Diversity and promoting a positive sense of identity

Standard 2 of the National Minimum Standards 2011 promotes the concept of children developing positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care. It is linked to developing a young person's resilience and encouraging them to exercise personal choice within reasonable limits established by the responsible parenting of the foster carer.

Religion/Culture/Discrimination

Religion

A child's religious and/or cultural beliefs and practices are often an important part of a child/young person's identity and lifestyle. It is essential, therefore, that these are respected and valued by foster carers and their families whilst a child is separated from his/her own family.

On occasions these beliefs and practices may be similar to the foster carer's own and it may be appropriate for the child to observe the foster carer's own religious practices. However, it would be inappropriate for a child who did not have a religious affiliation to be pressurised to participate in the foster carer's own choice of worship.

When a child's religious faith differs from the foster carers own it is important to be as informed as possible regarding the child's religious and cultural beliefs.

The child's social worker will assist in obtaining appropriate guidance and information in order that the child's placement can meet his/her religious and cultural needs. Although in some respects meeting these needs may involve aspects of care that the foster carer is unfamiliar with, such as preparation of specific foods, observing religious festivals, wearing particular items of clothing, etc. foster carers need to appreciate these differences and their importance to the child and his/her family.

Culture

A child or young person's culture is made up of many different factors such as language, racial identity, family attitudes, religion, memories, common experience and background.

Culture is part of a child's identity and heritage and it is vital that each child is given opportunities and encouragement to enjoy and take pride in their cultural heritage.

Foster carers should respect and safeguard this heritage; they may need to discuss the child's cultural needs with the child's parents or social worker to ensure that these needs are met.

Discrimination

There are many types of discrimination which include being treated unfairly on the basis of age, race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, social class and being 'in care'. Discrimination is wrong and causes offence, even though many people (often children) do not realise they are doing so. There are different forms of discrimination such as name calling, social exclusion, offensive language or even physical abuse.

Local authorities must provide services which give consideration to religion, racial origin, gender, sexuality and cultural and linguistic background. In addition services should be provided to help disabled children to lead a full life.

It is important that differences are recognised and appreciated rather than discriminated against. Carers should help children to respect differences or indeed to cope with any discrimination they experience. There are many practical ways carers can assist in meeting the specific needs of a child by helping them to follow their religion, keep to a certain diet, look after their hair and skin in a certain way, wear particular clothing and maintain their language.

Please ensure that any issues relating to discrimination are discussed with your child's social worker and your supervising social worker.

Birth Certificate

Carers will not usually be given a copy of the child's birth certificate; this will normally be held on the child's file. If you require a birth certificate for any purpose please speak to the child's social worker about this.

Passport

If a child placed with you requires a passport, please notify their social worker as soon as possible as this may take a number of weeks to process. The child's social worker will need to complete the application form in conjunction with the child's parents when accommodated (Section 20 Children Act 1989). Carers taking children abroad on holiday will need to obtain a letter from a Team Manager or the child's parents to take with them, confirming the legal status of the child concerned and the purpose of the trip and that they are local authority foster carers.

Confidentiality

When a foster child is placed, foster carers will need to receive sufficient information about the child's background to enable them to care for the child. This information will be provided by the child's social worker and, in some cases by the child's parents. Much of the information will be personal, including details of the child, his or her family and the circumstances which resulted in him or her coming into foster care. All of this information is given to foster carers in confidence. This must always be respected.

Who does not need to know?

People outside the immediate foster carer's family do not need to know the child's circumstances or family background. An acknowledgement that the child is part of the foster carer's family, and possibly their first name is sufficient. Beyond that the information is confidential and usually not for discussion.

Who needs to know?

Members of the foster carer's family who are likely to have regular contact with the child will need to have some of the information in order that they can relate to the child. How much the foster carer's own children can deal with will depend on their age, maturity and discretion. All family members will need to consider the importance of confidentiality.

Discussion with other foster carers

Foster carers need support from family, the Service for Children, Families and Wellbeing and other foster carers. Other foster carers may have experienced similar situations so the sharing of support and advice is important. This is not breaking confidentiality so long as the specific details of a child's circumstances are not discussed.

Being asked to keep a secret

There are times when a child or child's family or friends seek to give a foster carer information in confidence. This could be difficult if that information has a bearing on the child's health, safety or welfare, immediately or in the future. Foster carers need to explain before the confidence is shared, that they might not be able to comply with the request. The information therefore, may need to be given to the child's social worker by the child, by the person who is seeking to confide in the foster carer, or by the foster carer themselves.

Pocket Money

All Children in care are entitled to have pocket money allowances. Children's allowances are expected to be in line with their age. Full policies around this can be found via the following link

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/information-for-approved-foster-carers.aspx>

Children should be encouraged to manage their own finances and are to be given as much freedom as possible (taking into account their age and understanding) in making decisions about spending their own money.

Foster carers should assist and support children in their decision making and in helping them to develop the knowledge and skills to manage their own finances successfully. Children need to learn budgeting skills and need to be assisted in using appropriate financial organisations such as banks, building societies and government savings schemes. If possible, parental guidance should be sought on these matters for those under sixteen.

Children's money is to be kept safe. Young people should be offered the facility to store their money securely.

Children should be encouraged and supported to open and maintain bank accounts and, if possible, their pocket money and other allowances should be paid into these accounts.

If there are concerns about the manner in which children are spending their money or allowances, these concerns should be discussed with the child and the social worker. If there is a serious risk, the arrangements for giving money to the child may have to be restricted, but the child's social worker should make such a decision.

Leisure Activities

It is intended that the foster care payments will cover the cost of all reasonable leisure activities undertaken by a foster child whilst placed with their carers. Where it is anticipated that additional costs may be incurred in this respect, a request for additional money must be made in writing to the Head of Service and agreement obtained before the activity takes place.

Holidays

Standard 7.7 states that children can stay overnight, holiday with friends, or friends and relatives of their foster carers, or go on school trips, subject to requirements of the Care/Placement Plan, if foster carers consider it appropriate in individual circumstances.

DBS checks are not normally sought as a pre-condition.

Carers should always inform their Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker if they intend to take children placed with them on holiday. If the children you are caring for are placed on a voluntary basis, accommodated (under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989), their parents will also need to be consulted.

If carers intend to travel abroad (this includes Scotland) a letter will be required from Parent's or the Strategic Lead for Children in Care Services giving permission for the carers to take the child out of the country.

If carers are unable to take children placed on holiday with them it is important that they inform the child's social worker/their supervising social worker, as soon as possible, as an alternative placement will need to be identified.

If the child requires a passport the child's social worker will need to make this application. If the child is placed on a voluntary basis, a parent will also need to sign the application form.

Children who become the responsibility of the Children in Care Service should automatically have a passport application made for them.

Passport applications may take a number of weeks or even months to process so it is important that carers notify the child's social worker well in advance.

Pets

It is recognised that foster carers and their families may have pets. It is important to establish and record on the foster carer file, what pets there are in the household, so that when children are placed, fear of certain animals or allergies can be considered. A pet questionnaire will need to be completed to provide this information.

With regard to any animal which could be seen as dangerous e.g. some dogs or

reptiles, discussion needs to take place with the Placements Team social workers to establish where those animals would be kept and what risks, if any, there would be to children placed within this foster placement.

Standards of hygiene are very important and excessive number of pets, or poor hygienic conditions could lead to an early review and possible termination of the foster carer's approval.

In certain circumstances a foster carer may be asked to accommodate a child accompanied by a pet although this is quite unusual.

It is inadvisable to buy a pet for a child in placement, unless the placement is permanent, as the pet may have to be left behind when the child moves on.

Dog Ownership

If you already own a dog you will know that as part of keeping everyone in the home safe, your supervising social workers will have completed a Dog Risk Assessment to determine any risks. It is your responsibility to let us know about any changes regarding your pet (s).

It is the foster carer's responsibility to ensure adult supervision with any child when the pet is present. No child should be left unsupervised with an animal.

Having a pet in the family can be a good thing and provide children with a ready made friend, teach children to respect other creatures and educate them about the natural world. You should teach children how to relate to your pets to minimise the risk of them being bitten.

The Law and Fostering

Child Care Law

It is not necessary for foster carers to have an in-depth knowledge about child care law, but it is helpful for them to be aware of the types of court orders which can be made and the terminology used in working with the legislation. It is also useful to be aware of the National Minimum Standards which set out what we should do.

The Children Act 1989, the Fostering Regulations 2011, the National Minimum Standards, the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and The Adoption and Children Act 2002 are the major pieces of legislation which govern our work with children and families.

The basic principles of the Children Act 1989 are:

- The best place for children to be cared for is within their own families.
- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Birth parents should, wherever possible, be involved in all planning and decision making affecting their children.
- Legal proceedings should be avoided whenever possible.
- The welfare of the child should be promoted by a partnership between the family and the Local Authority.
- Children should not be removed from their families and contact should not be ended unless it is absolutely necessary to do so for their wellbeing.
- The child's needs arising from his/her race, culture, religion and language must be taken into consideration

Child Care Law Terminology:

Accommodated

If a child is under the age of sixteen he/she may be 'accommodated' with the consent of the parents. A Local Authority may provide accommodation for any child within their area (even though a person who has Parental Responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare. If over sixteen, parental consent is not necessary. A court order is not necessary. If a child is 'accommodated' he or she is said to be a child looked after.

Parental Responsibility (PR)

This means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent has in relation to a child and his property.

More than one person may have Parental Responsibility for the same child at the same time.

Parental Responsibility can be held by:

- The child's mother
- The child's father if he is married to the child's mother either at the time of the child's birth or subsequently.
- The court may order that the father shall have Parental Responsibility, if he applies to the court.
- The father and mother may by agreement (a Parental Responsibility agreement) provide for the father to have Parental Responsibility for the child.
- A father whose name is on the child's birth certificate. This was introduced by The Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- An adult with a residence order in respect of the child.

- An adult with a Special Guardianship Order in respect of the child (from 30th December 2005)
- An adopter
- The Local Authority if the child is subject of a Care Order (Section 31), Interim Care Order or is subject to a Placement Order.

If the child is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 the parents have full Parental Responsibility.

Parents and / or the local authority may by agreement delegate some tasks and decisions to the child's carers and these must be recorded in the Placement Information Record.

Parents only lose Parental Responsibility if their child is adopted - then there is a transfer of Parental Responsibility from the birth parents to the adoptive parents. Parents continue to have Parental Responsibility for their child even if other people acquire Parental Responsibility through a Care Order, Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order. In these circumstances Parental Responsibility is shared, although in the case of Special Guardianship the birth parents' rights to exercise Parental Responsibility are extremely limited. For Care Orders and Residence Orders birth parents should continue to be consulted on the care arrangements for their child, even if the child is living elsewhere.

For a child who is accommodated the birth parents retain sole Parental Responsibility and must be consulted on all aspects of their child's care.

Children in Need

This is the definition found under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989; it includes children who are disabled or whose vulnerability is such that they are

unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health and development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services.

Significant Harm

This is the criteria for an application to court for a Care Order under section 31 of the Children Act. This means that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer harm and that the harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to:

(1) the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him;

or

(2) the child being beyond parental control. (Extract from the Children Act 1989)

Harm means ill-treatment; or impairment of physical or mental health; or impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. For example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another e.g. domestic violence.

The Welfare Principle

The Welfare Principle is applied to all court proceedings and means that the child's welfare is the paramount consideration when reaching any decision about his/her upbringing. There is a checklist of seven features that must be addressed to apply this principle.

- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child (in the light of the child's age and understanding).
- The child's physical, emotional and educational needs.

- The likely effect of any changes in the child's circumstances.
- The age, sex, background and any characteristics of the child, which the court considers relevant.
- Any harm that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering.
- How capable each of the child's parents is, and any other relevant adult, in meeting the child's needs.
- The range of powers available to the court.

Orders within the Children Act 1989

Emergency Protection Order

This is an Order by which children are removed from a situation in which they are at risk. The Order must be signed by a magistrate. An Emergency Protection Order can last up to eight days with a possible extension up to a further seven days.

Police Protection Order

This is similar to Emergency Protection Order undertaken by the police. It lasts for a maximum of 72 hours.

Interim Care Order

An Interim Care Order (ICO) will often follow an Emergency Protection Order. The court may grant an Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989 (Section 31) if the court is satisfied that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

During this time the parties to the court proceedings will investigate/collate evidence. The court may make a direction that the child should have a medical (physical) or psychiatric examination or other assessment. The child can refuse to consent to

such examination if they are of sufficient understanding to make an informed decision. Sometimes further ICOs can be made which will last up to four weeks.

There should be as few Interim Care Orders as possible to avoid delay in making a final decision. It is very unusual for parents not to have contact with their child under Interim Orders.

Care Order

The court will make a Care Order if it believes:

- That a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- That the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him/ her if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him/ her; or
- That the child is beyond parental control.

The Order will state that the Local Authority must look after the child and provide somewhere for him/her to live. A Care Order gives the Local Authority Parental Responsibility, jointly with the parents. The Local Authority can determine the extent to which a parent may meet his or her Parental Responsibility.

The Care Order lasts until the young person reaches the age of 18, or until the child is adopted, or a Supervision, Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order is made, or the court discharges the Order. There is a presumption that parents will have contact with their children whilst in care unless there is a court Order to the contrary. While a Care Order is in force the Local Authority shall not cause a child to be brought up in any religious persuasion other than that in which he would have been brought up if the Order had not been made. No person may change the child's

surname or remove him from the UK for more than a month without either the written consent of every person who has Parental Responsibility for the child or by leave of the court.

Contact Order

This Order directs that certain persons should have contact with a child; it will also state how often that contact should take place and possibly what form the contact should take. A Contact Order lasts until the child/young person is 16 years old or until the court agrees it is no longer necessary. In exceptional circumstances it may last until the young person is 18 years old.

Supervision Order

This is granted when a child or young person living at home is required to have a social worker to visit to ensure they are safe. It shall be the duty of the supervisor .To advise, assist and befriend the supervised child. The Order usually lasts for one year, no longer than three years and only up to the age of eighteen years. The Order can cease upon the making of a Care Order or upon the agreement of the court.

Special Guardianship Order

Special Guardianship Arrangements are intended for children and young people who require legal security within their placement but do not wish to sever legal ties with their birth family. A Special Guardianship Order can provide a permanent placement for children and young people. Special Guardianship gives the carer clear responsibility for the care of the child and for taking decisions to do with their care. It is not the Local Authority which makes an application for such an order but individuals connected with the child or young person. If such an application is

successful it results in the child being no longer Looked After. In some circumstances foster carers may wish to apply for a Special Guardianship Order. The Local Authority is required to assess the need for any on-going support which may be needed. Information regarding Trafford Council's SGO policy and support can be accessed via the following Link

<https://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/Special-Guardship-Orders.aspx>

A Placement Order

A Placement Order is a court Order made under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 which allows a Local Authority to place a child for adoption with any prospective adopters it chooses. It continues until an Adoption Order is made or the Order is revoked by a court.

Adoption Order

Adoption is the legal process whereby all rights and responsibilities are transferred from the birth parents (and Local Authority) to the adoptive parents.

Adoption Process

For children who are unable to return to their birth families the potential for securing a permanent alternative family by adoption should be addressed through the child's reviews. Once an adoption plan is agreed for a child the Local Authority will work to achieve an adoption placement. This can be a lengthy process sometimes extending to all adoption agencies in the UK, particularly if the child has some degree of special need. Foster carers play an important role in supporting an adoption plan and preparing the child to move on. The County Council will reimburse any additional expenditure incurred by the foster carers in bridging a child to adoptive parents. A

particular point to stress about adoption is confidentiality. Foster carers often facilitate contact between the children they care for and their parents and other relatives. When a child is moving on to an adoption placement, foster carers must never make known to birth relatives the identity and location of the adoptive parents. Adoption must be considered for all children at the third review.

Moving Children/Bridging to Adoption

It is important that foster carers are able to provide all relevant information to new adoptive parents about the child to help provide some consistency in their care. The child's social worker and your supervising social worker will help you collate information such as details of their routine, likes and dislikes, medical information and general personality traits. See later section about moving children on to adoption for more details.

Twin-Tracking

There are occasions when an adoption plan is considered for a child, before it has been decided whether or not a return home is possible. This is done to avoid unnecessary delay. Your supervising social worker will advise you of the Care Plan for children placed, and support you in working with the child's social worker to progress this.

Foster Carer Adoptions

Adoption is fundamentally different to the fostering task. Some carers, once they have experience of fostering children, decide to apply for approval as a prospective adopter. In other situations carers may foster a child for many years and then decide that they want to make a commitment to that child by adoption. Adopting a child means taking on all the associated responsibilities, including financial. However the

Council does have a discretionary Adoption Allowance Scheme which may assist in some situations. There are different routes by which foster carers may adopt a child in their care, and there is no limitation on the period of time a child may reside with carers before applying to the court for an Adoption Order.

In all cases foster carers should first discuss their interest in adopting a child in their care with the child's social worker, or Fostering Team supervising social worker. Early discussion is particularly important if the child already has an adoption plan, as consideration of the carer's situation must not seriously delay the process for the child. There is an established procedure for responding to such requests which involves discussion with managers and consideration by the Adoption and Permanence Panel. In those situations where a child has been fostered by the same carers for a long time adoption by the foster carers may be a very positive outcome for the child, providing security that even the best fostering cannot achieve.

If you feel that adopting the child you foster would be the right thing to do for the child and your family, discuss your wishes with the child's social worker and your supervising social worker as soon as possible.

Children's Guardian

A Children's Guardian is a person appointed by the court who looks after a child's interests when an application has been made for a court Order. The Children's Guardian is not employed by the County Council. The role of the Children's Guardian is to listen to the child, birth relatives, social worker, foster carer, teacher, or anyone else who is involved with the child and to read relevant reports. The Children's Guardian will also provide a written report advising which course of action is in the child's best interests and also will appoint a solicitor to represent the child in court.

Going to Court

When Care Proceedings are progressing foster carers will need to know from the child's social worker what type of application has been made to court and the parties involved. Foster carers may very occasionally be asked to give evidence in court about the foster child in Care Proceedings. The reason for this is foster carers' knowledge is valued. Foster carers may be called to give evidence by the child, through his/her Solicitor, the parents or the Local Authority. Whether or not a foster carer is called as a witness, they may have a right to make representations to the court.

Family court proceedings may be heard in the Magistrates court, County Court or High Court, so foster carers need to be clear as to where the proceedings are to be heard. Procedures are fairly standard between these courts although the officials involved and the formality will vary, so it is often helpful to arrive early to be able to be shown around the court room before the case starts. Attending court can seem a daunting experience but the social worker for the child and your supervising social worker will offer advice and support and help in preparation before the court date. Familiarity with procedures and what is required of a foster carer will enable the carer to feel more knowledgeable and comfortable in this role. Please contact the Fostering Team supervising social worker for more information.

Criminal Proceedings - Youth Court

If the police think that a child aged 10 or over has committed an offence they can bring court proceedings. They will inform the child that the facts will be reported and, if a prosecution is to be brought, it will either be through a summons to the court or a charge. In rare circumstances, the child can be detained by the police until they bring

him/her to court. When the police are trying to discover whether or by whom an offence has been committed, they are entitled to question any person, whether suspected or not, from whom they think any useful information can be obtained. As far as is practicable young people under the age of 17, whether suspected of a crime or not, should only be interviewed in the presence of a parent or guardian (or if the young person is the responsibility of the Local Authority, that Authority) or a social worker or other responsible adult who is not a police officer. Foster carers cannot act as responsible adults. For a child who is looked after, the Local Authority has responsibility for arranging legal representation. It is helpful if one or both foster carers are able to attend court to support the foster child. If carers are asked to give evidence, either for the prosecution or the defence, advice should be sought from the child's social worker.

Independent Visitors

Some children, who are looked after, have little or no contact with their families or other adult friends who may support them. In such circumstances, the Children Act allows the local authority to appoint an Independent Visitor for a child, to take on a befriending and supportive role.

Independent visitors are most likely to be appointed where:

- There is infrequent communication between the child and his or her parents
- The parents have not visited the child over the last 12 months

However, if it is in the child's interests, the above conditions do not have to be met; but an independent visitor cannot be appointed against the child's wishes.

It may be helpful for an independent visitor to be appointed if:

- A child is in a placement that does not reflect the child's race and culture and the independent visitor can provide a link with the child's racial and cultural heritage
- If the child is isolated in their placement because the placement is a long way from the child's home

If you think a child placed with you would benefit from an independent visitor talk to the child or young person and his or her social worker about it.

Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for

Fostering Services 2011

Fostering Regulations govern how Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies will operate their Fostering Services. The regulations are mandatory and the fostering service must comply with them. The standards are used by OFSTED to assist them in their decision making when inspecting and regulating the service.

Access to the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards can be found via the following link

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf

Fostering Inspections

The fostering service is inspected by OFSTED to ensure that the standards outlined above are satisfied. Children and foster carers may be contacted by OFSTED Inspectors and asked to participate in the inspection process. This will take a variety of forms:

- Questionnaires
- Individual interview with the child
- Individual interview with the foster carer
- Group meetings with foster carers
- Attendance at reviews or other care planning meetings

Statutory Notifications

There are some occurrences that happen in foster homes that the service must report to OFSTED and others. These are:

- Death of a child placed with foster carers
- Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service who is unsuitable to work with children
- Serious illness or accident of a child
- Outbreak of a serious infectious disease at a foster home
- Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution
- Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home

- Serious complaint about a foster carer
- Initiation of a child protection enquiry involving a child
- A child being missing from care.

If any of these occur in your foster home you are asked to inform your supervising social worker who will notify the child's social worker and the other relevant people.

You will need to complete a Notification of Serious incident form . This is attached at the end of this section. If in doubt whether an incident constitutes one of the above, let us know about it, so that a decision can be made whether or not to notify the appropriate people.

Safeguarding

Child Protection Conference

A Child Protection Conference is held when there are serious concerns that a child may be suffering or be at risk of suffering significant harm and action may be needed by the agencies involved to protect him or her. The meeting is attended by representatives from all the agencies involved in safeguarding children locally, i.e. health, education, police and the Service for Children, Families and Wellbeing.

It may also be attended by the child (if old enough to participate), the parents, solicitors for the parties concerned and foster carers when the child concerned. is looked after. The conference is chaired by a person independent from the local social work children and families teams.

The purpose of the meeting is to share information regarding the welfare of the child and decide if a child protection plan should be formulated to address the concerns. A key worker, usually the child's social worker, will be appointed to ensure the plan is

followed through. A group of people involved with the child will also be asked to meet regularly to review the plan. This is called a Core Group.

Once a child's name is placed on a Child Protection Plan a review conference is held every 6 months or more often if it is felt necessary. A child's name may be removed from a Child Protection Plan if s/he is no longer thought to be at risk.

Core Group Meeting

Foster carers may be asked to be part of the Core Group. This is a group of people who will meet regularly to plan support for the child and family.

Strategy Meetings

A strategy meeting may be held when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Its purpose is for the professionals involved (the local authority, Police, Health, Education), to share information and to decide what further investigations/action needs to be taken in order to protect the child concerned. This meeting precedes any Child Protection Conference.

A strategy meeting may be held when serious allegations are made against a foster carer, again to decide how best to proceed. A decision may be made to suspend your approval.

A clear and comprehensive report of any allegations made against a member of a fostering household should be undertaken. A copy of the report should be given to the subject of the allegation as soon as the investigation is concluded.

After an investigation is concluded a carer's approval as suitable to foster may need to be reviewed and placed back before the Fostering Panel.

Finance, Tax and Benefits

You must inform the Inland Revenue that you are fostering. Please follow link for further information or request a copy of the help sheet 236 by ringing

0845 900 0404

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/helpsheets/hs236.pdf>

HM Revenue & Customs treats foster carers as self-employed. You only pay income tax on fostering income which exceeds a set 'qualifying amount'. Your fostering income is unlikely to exceed your qualifying amount.

Child Benefit

Foster carers are not entitled to claim Child Benefit, Tax Credits or National Insurance Credits for the children placed. The child's parents should also inform the Department of Work and Pensions, that they are not caring for the child. If carers were claiming Child Benefit prior to approval as foster carers they should cease the claim for children fostered once approved. If in any doubt about Child Benefit matters foster carers should contact the Child Benefit enquiry line on 0845 302 1444.

Social Security Benefits and Tax Credits

You are not entitled to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit for fostered children.

You may be entitled to Working Tax Credit (WTC) as a foster carer, even if you do not have a job, and even if you are retired. You may be entitled to Income Support, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit. When you claim income-related benefits or WTC your fostering income is ignored in working out how much you get. Get advice to check if you would be entitled to benefits or WTC. See 'Information and Assistance' below.

You may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for a foster child with a

disability, and Carer's Allowance if you look after a foster child who gets DLA middle or highest rate care component.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

- You should inform the child's social worker when a claim for DLA is made or where DLA is already being paid;
- You should discuss with the child's social worker, the child and their family (where appropriate) how this money should be spent/saved;
- You should keep a record of how the money is spent/saved;
- Any savings should be in the child's name;

If you are unsure about any aspect of DLA monies you should discuss this with the child's social worker.

National Insurance

You only need to pay Class 2 National Insurance contributions if you're fostering income exceeds your qualifying amount.

You can protect your State Pension and earn extra pension by applying for 'Credits for parents and carers' on form CF411A from HM Revenue & Customs.

About Fostering

Foster Carer Agreement

Once foster carers have been approved by Trafford's Fostering Panel they are asked to enter into a written agreement with Trafford. The agreement outlines what is expected of foster carers in terms of how they care for children placed and also changes they should notify the Directorate of. Access to the Foster Carer Agreement document can be found via the following link.

<https://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/children-families-and-wellbeing/guide-for-practitioners.aspx>

The Foster Carer Agreement and undertaking requires all foster carers to notify the fostering service in writing without delay of any change in the composition of their household.

Any new household members over the age of 18 years must undertake an enhanced DBS disclosure immediately.

Where the new household member is a partner, the following must apply:

- Immediate DBS check
- The new partner must be informed that there will be an expectation that s/he will attend training in the same way that any other new carer would be required to do and they must be invited to attend the earliest available Skills to Foster course
- A new assessment of the couple must commence. Carers are not approved as individuals
- It may be possible to use background information already collected and on file, but it is important that new relationships within the household are explored thoroughly in the assessment, with evidence of competence recorded

- All relevant references must be undertaken on the couple, with personal references concentrating on referees who know the applicants as a couple

Once the assessment is completed, it should be presented to Fostering Panel in the usual way. The Panel must consider the evidence and make a recommendation.

Where the new partner refused to attend the Skills to Foster course, or will not engage in a thorough assessment, consideration must be given to the best interests of any child (ren) in placement. If it is felt that their interests would not be served by a change of placement, an interim assessment must be presented to Fostering Panel until those young people have moved on, at which time the couple would be de-registered.

In circumstances where the new partner is also a Trafford Council approved foster carer either individually or with another partner, a review of their approval must be undertaken within 6 months of joining the household. The review should concentrate on the new partnership and should consider carefully the new relationships created within the reconstituted household.

Consideration should be given as to the new category of approval as well as the effect on any child(ren) already in placement.

Reviews of these circumstances must always be presented to the Fostering Panel

Training

There is an expectation that foster carers will undertake training. A new training programme is released each year and will form part of the agreement between foster carers and the Authority. All Foster Carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker and training will be discussed and reviewed through 6 weekly supervision sessions. Prior to being approved as a foster carer foster carers should attend the 'Skills to Foster Training. All foster carers are expected to complete core training within the first 12 months of approval. The Fostering Training and Development Standards (TSDS) work book also is to be completed in the first 12 months of approval for general foster carers and within the first 18 months for family and friend foster carers.

A link to the foster carers training programme can be accessed via the following link

<https://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/information-for-approved-foster-carers.aspx>

Trafford Council have dedicated training officer within the Family Placement Team.:

Jonathan Hughes

Trafford Town Hall

Talbet Road

Stretford

M32 0TH

Telephone 0161 912 2448

Email: jonathan.hughes@trafford.gov.uk

Children Looked After

When a child comes into care they will probably be under considerable stress. It is very important that this early stage is well planned and handled carefully and that the child has an opportunity to express their wishes and feelings.

Each child will be different and will need to be treated as an individual. Quite often a child may be rude or aggressive or totally silent. Foster carers need to have a good understanding that the child may react in this way. Foster carers need to offer a welcoming, warm environment. The first few days may be very difficult for the child and carers need to gradually persuade the child to take part in the life of the foster care household. Carers will need to explain to the child what is going on, why they are staying there, who is responsible for them and who to go to for any help needed. Dependent on the age and the understanding of the child carers need to give as much information as possible.

The link to the Voice of the Child is currently being designed and will be available shortly.

Planned Placements

Placements of children should be planned whenever possible, giving opportunity for the child and their parent to meet and visit the carers and talk about routines, likes and dislikes, friends, school, health, who lives at the home and visiting arrangements. (See Placement and Pre-placement visits below)

The Social Worker must complete the referral form and risk assessment. This should include the following:

- Accurate details of the reason for the referral and what are seen as the aims of the placement.
- Information regarding the child's previous history.
- Clear understanding of future plans for the child.

This will be completed electronically as will the matching process and this will be signed off by the Team Leader or Service Manager.

Any request for external placements will need forwarded to the Strategic Lead for Children in Care for funding agreement and then presented to the External Placements Panel. This request will be completed by the child's Social Worker.

The Placement Information Record must be drawn up by the social worker before the child is placed, or if not reasonably practicable, within 5 days of the start of the placement.

- A pre-placement visit must be agreed and arranged.
- A pre –placement meeting will take place.
- A date for the placement to commence must be agreed with the foster carers
- The date of the Placement agreement 72 hour Planning meeting must

be arranged by the Social Worker.

Emergency Placements

In an emergency a child will be taken to a foster carer, often from a distressing situation. The child, social worker and carer will not have time to make preparations and will need to consider carefully what will help the child.

Social Worker Tasks

During Office Hours, a decision about the need for accommodation should be taken by the Social Worker and the Team Manager. When a placement is needed the referral and risk assessment should be made to the Placements Team

- If **Out of Hours** all admissions must go through EDT (Emergency Duty Team). EDT should contact the On Call Manager prior to any placement.
- The Placements team must be informed as soon as possible of any emergency placements and arrangements made to contact the foster carer.
- In all cases the Social Worker is to arrange to visit the child the next working day.
- The Social Worker and Placements Team must arrange and plan a 72hr Planning Meeting.
- Any emergency placements with an approved carer outside of their terms of approval can be made for up to 6 working days with the agreement of the Service Manager of the Placements Team and the approval of the Strategic Lead for Children in Care. This is called a Variation of Approval.

Checklist for all placements

- Have all relevant people been informed about the (potential) placement? (e.g. school)
- Do foster carers have all the information they require to support the child and their family effectively during introductions and placement?
- Have other children in the household been prepared for the placement as far in advance as possible?
- Pre-placement visits – ensure the child and, if appropriate, their family is invited to at least one pre-admission visit.

Introductions to Placement and Pre-placement visits

A sensitive, caring approach at these times is crucial to the development of good relationships. All Placements should adhere to the Matching Checklist and all children and young people being placed should be provided with a ***‘Welcome To Our Home’*** booklet provided by the Foster Carer prior to being placed.

- Admission to a foster home can be a very anxious time for a child and their family. Make them feel welcome, offer refreshments. Make sure the home is welcoming warm, clean and tidy.
- Introduce the child to all members of the foster household including any pets.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that privacy for a child and their family is upheld from other children placed.

- The child should have some understanding, appropriate to their age and level of development, of the aims of the placement and the future plans for them. Every effort should be made to communicate with the child to assess their wishes and feelings about the placement, their future and any other significant matters.
- Information will need to be given, including 'house rules', health and safety procedures, but do not assume these are understood or remembered. It will need to be repeated later. Give information in manageable amounts.
- Try to find out what the child's interests are, what they like to do and enjoy. Leisure activities offer positive experience to children.

Personal belongings are important, any items of value must be recorded and security of valuables discussed. Young people and children should be encouraged to bring favorite and cherished possessions with them.

Placement Documents

When children are first placed with foster carers, the carers should receive documentation which will provide them with the information they need to care for the children appropriately. It is essential that carers have these details and if you do not receive them on placement or very soon afterwards contact the child's social worker or your supervising social worker immediately. Access to a list of key documents foster carers are provided with can be found via the following link.

<https://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/docs/key-documents-list.pdf>

Placement Plan /Care Plans

The Placement Plan must be drawn up by the area social worker before the child is placed, or if not reasonable practicable within 72 hours working days of the start of

the placement and this forms part of the Care Plan. Information including the child's basic details, GP and health needs, education details, contact with significant persons, religious and cultural needs are contained in it. It should also contain consent to medical treatment signed by a parent, person with Parental Responsibility or by a senior Child Care Manager. Carers should also receive Care Plan Parts 1 and 2, giving further background information relating to the child on or soon after placement. Foster carers will be requested to sign the Placement Plan agreeing to care appropriately for the child.

Before a Looked After Children's Review both the carer and the child need to think about what they want to say. The foster carer should support the child to put forward their views, wishes and feelings as part of the review process. The foster carer is supported to contribute effectively to the review of the Care Plan which includes the Placement Plan. Once the review has been completed carers and child (if appropriate) will receive a copy.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All Children who are looked after have their educational needs monitored via a Personal Education Plan. This plan is devised by school, carers, parents and social worker and reviewed annually. Foster carers are expected to attend every PEP meeting. Carers will receive a copy of the plan.

Recording

Recordings About Foster Carers.

Information is recorded by the Directorate on all children who are looked after (in

foster care) and all foster carers. Social workers record all contact they have with you on your electronic file on Liquid Logic.

If you wish to see your file you should firstly discuss with your social worker the process and procedure that needs to be followed.

This procedure is as follows:

If somebody wants to access a copy of any personal data about them that is held by the Council, they need to make a subject access request. This must be done in writing to the Family Placement Team Manager and any request should be accompanied with a copy of the applicant's identity (this is to help ensure personal data is not disclosed to those who aren't entitled to it). By law, the Council has 40 days, following the date the request is received, to respond.

Recording by foster carers

Recording is an essential part of the care provided by foster carers.

Carers need to provide detailed records of daily events on each child they care for, as well as monitor their behaviour, medication they have received and potentially prepare evidence for court.

Each carer is provided with a lockable container to store recording and 'Children Looked After' documentation.

Carers are provided with a record book, medication recording forms and notification of serious incident forms for each child in placement. Supervising Social Workers need to review the recording a carer is making during their supervision visits and this recording should be returned to the department when a child leaves the carers.

Training is provided for carers on recording and it is important for all carers to attend this at least once.

Why Record?

- ***To preserve information about a child***
- ***To protect carers from allegations***

Fostering Allowances

Payments are made up of 2 elements, the first being a payment to the carer to cover the cost of caring for a child. This first element is based on the weekly national minimum fostering allowance and it is what the government calculates the cost of a child in care to be. The second element is a payment to the carers in recognition of the skills that a carer has and the training that they have attended. As carers gain skills and experience they are able to progress to higher bands and receive a higher skills payment.

Information regarding payment rates can be found via the following link.

<https://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/fostering-payment-rates.aspx>

Additional Allowances

Fostering allowances should, in most circumstances, enable the foster carers to meet the needs of a child. It is recognised, however, that there will be certain exceptional circumstances in which additional allowances might be paid:

Clothing

For children newly 'looked after', (i.e. not transferring from another care placement) an initial clothing grant is payable if required and is accessed through the child's social worker.

A guide to the standards of clothing required for children in care is available from your Supervising Social Worker. This forms the basis on which clothing grants will be paid.

In cases where a child moves between LA placements, it is expected that foster carers will maintain a young person's clothing through the fostering allowance.

Health

As is expected of birth parents, foster carers are expected to ensure that the general health needs of young people are met and any routine payments (e.g. glasses, contact lenses) for which a free prescription is not available should be made from the foster carer allowance.

Where payments are required of over £100, then exceptional circumstances could be claimed for. In this circumstance a request for additional money must be put in writing by the child's social worker to the Head of Service (Children in Care) for agreement.

Transport

It is expected that a foster carer will promote a young person's education and their contact with their birth family. This can extend to providing transport for a young person and where a foster carer is put to extra expense on behalf of the authority in respect of a child in their care, journeys over a 3 mile radius of a foster carer's home will be reimbursed at volunteers' mileage rate or public transport rate.

For journeys other than to contact, school, or health appointments agreement must be sought before the journey is made as to whether mileage will be paid in this circumstance.

School Trips

It is seen that the participation of children in care in school trips is an important part of their school life and education. It is expected that foster carer's allowances should cover the cost of these up to £100.

Holidays

Holidays should be paid for according to the holiday grant to which all foster carers are entitled to for each placement they have. If a carer requests further money for a holiday, then the child's social worker must put this request in writing which will be submitted to the Head of Service.

Leisure

It is intended that the foster care payments will cover the cost of all reasonable leisure activities undertaken by a foster child whilst placed with their carers. Where it is anticipated that additional costs may be incurred in this respect, a request for additional money must be made in writing to the Head of Service and agreement obtained before the activity takes place.

The Fostering Panel

Trafford Fostering Panel is constituted in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations. The Service Manager for Fostering & Adoption is responsible for appointing to membership of the Fostering Panel. In doing so, the Fostering Service is committed to ensuring wherever possible that the membership of the Panel reflects the cultural diversity of the wider community.

A Panel consists of:

- The independent chair (or one of two vice chairs)
- One social worker with at least three years post-qualifying experience
- Three other members

The purpose of the fostering panel is to:

- To consider each application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to act as a foster carer
- To recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to act as a foster carer and whether or not the terms of approval remain appropriate on the occasion of the carer's first review or any subsequent review referred to the Panel
- To receive management information about the outcome of foster carers' annual reviews
- To advise on procedures, in particular the procedure for the review of foster carers' approval
- To provide a quality assurance function by monitoring and reviewing the assessment process
- To monitor the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children
- To give advice and make recommendations on other matters/cases referred to it

Applicants and Existing Carers Attendance

Potential foster carers are invited to attend Panel (with a supporter if they wish) where they are seeking approval and may attend for subsequent reviews. Where there has been an allegation or serious complaint against a carer or where the Fostering Service is recommending de-registration (against the carer's wishes) the carer must be invited to attend Panel.

Panel must make its recommendations within eight months of the receipt of the fostering application.

The recommendations of Fostering Panel must be conveyed to the Decision Maker within 7 working days of Panel. The Joint Director (Children, Young People and Families Social lead) acts as agency decision-maker in all cases.

The decision maker must notify the foster carer of the decision within 7 working days of the Panel. Once approved the foster carer must be asked to sign the Foster Care Agreement.

If a carer wishes to appeal against the decision they have the right to make written representations either to the decision maker or the Independent Reviewing Mechanism within 28 days of receiving written notice of the decision.

If representations are made, the decision maker must refer these back to the Panel for further consideration. The Panel must once again make recommendations and the decision maker may then make a final decision.

If the representation was made to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism, the findings of this will be relayed to the decision maker.

The carer must be informed in writing as soon as possible as to what the final decision is and the reasons for making it.

De-Registration

When an applicant is approved as a foster carer their name and basic information is kept in the form of a register. If a foster carer subsequently decides that he/she no longer wishes to foster, a letter of resignation should be sent to the fostering team and notification will be sent to the panel administrator after 28 days and their name will be removed from the register. .

Terminations of Approval

In some circumstances it may be necessary for the Directorate to terminate the approval of a carer. This could happen if there are substantiated concerns about the carer, regarding the standard of care they provide or an allegation made against them. Applications to terminate a carer's approval must be heard by the Fostering Panel who may recommend termination. If this is upheld by the Agency Decision Maker the carer will have 28 days to make written representation either by appeal to Panel or via the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The IRM is not an appeal process. The review panel may only make a recommendation and the decision

remains with the decision maker of the agency as to whether they change their original recommendation. The agency must take into account IRM recommendation. The IRM provides prospective and existing foster carers a choice and can be seen as more independent by the carers or applicants themselves

The Have Your Say Forum

The 'Have Your Say Forum' is intended to be a consultative group bringing together Service Management, Foster Carers, Residential Staff, Supported Lodgings Providers and Staying Put Providers and related professionals in order to discuss Policies and Practice and Service issues.

The overall aim is to bring about a fully integrated approach and improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Complaints Process

A foster carer, child or parent who is not happy about any aspect of their involvement with the Council has a right to complain.

Our complaints procedure has 3 stages, these are:

Stage 1 - Informal

We aim to address your complaint at this first point of contact. If that is not possible, your complaint will be dealt with through the council's formal complaints procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal

Your complaint will be acknowledged within three working days and directed to the relevant service to generate a full response. This is usually within 20 working days of receiving your acknowledgement.

In some cases where your complaint is complex, this may need to be extended, but

you will be kept fully informed of progress.

Stage 3 - Formal

If you are unhappy with the response to your complaint, you can request a review known as a Stage 3 Review within 6 weeks of receiving it. If it is decided that a Review is to take place it will be carried out on behalf of the Chief Executive, either by a senior manager or a review panel. If it is determined that a review is unnecessary i.e. it has been dealt with at Stage 2, you will be notified in writing.

What happens when I request a Stage 3 Review?

Your request will be considered by the Head of Service, or appropriate senior officer, as the first stage of the review. If they decide that a Stage 3 Review should take place you will be notified in writing and given a date for its commencement.

If it is decided that a full Review is unnecessary you will be notified in writing and provided with an explanation why.

What happens during a Stage 3 Review?

A stage 3 Review is carried out by Officers of the Council on behalf of the Chief Executive. They will review the investigation that took place at Stage 2 and provide you with a written report detailing their Review.

The outcome of the Review may be the same as at Stage 2. The panel may also make recommendations in order to improve services provided.

What should I do if I am unhappy with the outcome?

Stage 3 is the final stage of Trafford Borough Council's complaints procedure. If you remain unhappy with the response you receive you can then contact the Local Government Ombudsman who will look into your complaint independently.

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 061

Complaints will, wherever possible be resolved informally by a member of staff directly involved or by their Team Manager. More information about the Council's complaints procedures is available from your supervising social worker or can be viewed on the website at

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-in-care/children-in-care.aspx>

Where you can complete your complaint on line

or

email direct to ice@trafford.gov.uk

Foster carers also have the right to refer their complaint directly to OFSTED at the following address:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Ofsted Contact Centre: 0300 123 1231

or: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Support and Supervision for Foster Carers

Trafford fostering service is continually reviewing the support and training offered to foster carers to provide them with the necessary support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide the best possible care.

All Trafford foster carers have an equal right to training, support and supervision from their fostering service. S20 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 sets out that support arrangements should be accessible and transparent and that they should also be aimed at hard to reach carers.

Where unqualified staff or students carry out social work functions they must do so under the direct supervision of a qualified Social Worker who is accountable for their work.

Support for Foster Carers

All foster carers will be recruited in line with National Minimum Standards and general carers will be assessed using the Fostering Network Skills Assessment. Connected Persons will be assessed using the Connected Persons/Special Guardianship Assessment report.

Following initial 'Skills to Foster' training, all applicants will be allocated a Social Worker from the Fostering Team, or other suitably experience social worker who will complete their assessment.

The process of recruitment, preparation and assessment should prove the starting point for the development of a supportive relationship between the Fostering Team and its foster carers.

All carers, when approved, will receive a copy of the Foster Carers handbook, which offers advice on various subjects. New carers will also be given a copy of the induction pack, together with copies of relevant procedures and appropriate phone numbers. All foster carers must also receive an induction (S 20 FNMS 2011)

Each approved foster carer will have a named Supervising Social Worker from the fostering team. This Supervising Social Worker will visit the carers at least every three months when a child is in placement (for respite carers & family and friend carers, this arrangement can be more flexible). S21 of FNMS 2011 requires that meetings between foster carers and the supervising social worker must have a clear, recorded purpose and that they operate good systems of communication.

These supervision visits will be recorded on the supervision pro forma and signed by both parties, the carers keeping a copy with the original scanned on to the carers' ICS file. There must be at least one unannounced visit per year. The visits are to discuss placements and look at carers' training and support needs. The Supervising Social Worker (SSW) may visit more often than this if requested or felt necessary in order to support the placement.

As well as regular visits, the SSW will make telephone and / or email contact with the carer as required. If the carer wishes to speak to their SSW, a message should be left, with all calls being returned as soon as possible. If the situation is more urgent there is always a Fostering Team duty social worker available during office hours that carers can talk to over the phone. This Duty Worker can listen to concerns and give general advice and guidance.

Fostering is a task undertaken by the whole family and therefore it is acknowledged that carers' own children may require some support. Carers' children will always be included in the annual review of carers where they can be seen separately from their parents and their views sought. If they have any specific support or training needs, these will be acknowledged and every effort made to find a way of meeting these needs. Carers' children can also have access to the SSW at other times if they request it.

The SSW will be responsible for discussing training needs with carers and their families. This may be as issues arise during three monthly supervision or at the carers' annual review. Trafford fostering service provides a number of training opportunities for its carers, both centrally and locally. At times, in certain circumstances, it may be possible for carers to attend external courses. E learning is also available.

All approved foster carers must work towards meeting the TSDS training and must complete this in order to progress through the payment bands.

All foster carers are provided with training on behaviour management. The fostering service training strategy offers foster carers a range of training opportunities to receive training to provide appropriate care when caring for children with complex health needs and in safely managing medicines.

Where it has been identified that a foster carer will need to be provided with a break from caring for a child this must be achieved in such a way that they continue to meet the needs of any children placed. The use of respite foster carers can be planned or arrangements with assessed members of the foster carers extended family. It is important that the child has a consistent respite carer and is not therefore introduced to several sets of respite carers.

Trafford's fostering service will ensure that all carers receive appropriate remuneration for undertaking the fostering task. Carers will be paid in line with the Foster Care Allowances, and the Payments for Skills Policy and the Additional Payments Policy that are revised annually. If an item is not covered in the guidelines, a discussion will take place between the Family Placement Team Manager and the Area Team Manager to provide an appropriate response.

All foster carers will be expected to attend the Fostering Support Group. These are run at least monthly and are facilitated by a SSW. Each group should have its own "contract" negotiated between the group members. It is important that all members have ownership of the group and share a commitment to it. New members should be introduced to the group in a positive way.

All foster carers have the right to as much information on the child as is available. Carers should receive copies of the Referral and Placement Information Record either before or at the point a child is placed. They should also receive a copy of child's Care Plan. This information should be produced by the child's Social Worker.

At each child's Placement Agreement Meeting and subsequently at their reviews any other support needs should be identified and discussed. It is important however that any concerns or need for additional support that are identified between reviews are addressed at the time rather than waiting to be dealt with at a review.

Each child in care placed in foster care should have a statutory review within 28 days of becoming looked after, then within a further three months and every six months after that. These are minimum requirements and consideration must be given to bringing forward the date of a review where a child moves into a new placement.

Copies of minutes should be made available to foster carers. These meetings are to look at the needs of the child and to ensure that the placement is still meeting those needs. If any extra support is needed, this should also be discussed.

The Social Worker for the child should visit the child once in the first week of placement, and then at intervals of six weeks during the first year of placement, and thereafter visit at intervals of not more than three months. There should be a mutual exchange of information between the Social Worker and the foster carer throughout the placement.

If a carer requires any assistance outside normal office hours, they have access to the Emergency Duty Team who is available to give advice and guidance.

Carers will be encouraged to develop support networks with other carers. This may be on a formal basis through support groups or mentoring or more informally through the Foster Care Association. The Foster Care Association provides social events for carers, both with and without children; they meet regularly with managers, locally and centrally to discuss aspects of fostering and represent carer's views and are available to offer advice if possible. Carers may get together more informally in groups or on a one to one basis to offer mutual support.

Fostertalk

All approved foster carers are provided membership to Fostertalk. Fostertalk membership provides foster carers with advice and support including:

- Legal advice service
- Arrest and interview assistance
- Accountancy Advice
- Financial advice
- Discounts
- Website forums
- Education Advisory service

- Counseling helpline
- Medical first aid helpline

<http://www.fostertalk.org>

Visits and Contact

The Supervising Social Worker (SSW) from the Fostering Team must contact the foster carer monthly. The worker or another member of the team must be available on a working day basis for discussions of need.

All supervision/support visits must be recorded on case notes of the foster carer file and supervision pro-forma. A signed copy must be scanned onto the foster carers file and a copy of supervision reports must be given to the foster carers.

Unannounced Visits

All foster carers must be visited at least once a year in an unannounced visit. These visits must be written up as an unannounced visit clearly on the F/C File.

Unannounced visits are monitored by the Team Manager and can take place at any time. These visits may be routine or in response to a complaint or concern. The reason for the visit should in all cases be fully explained to the foster carers.

Unannounced visits provide an opportunity for SSW's to ensure that foster carers are providing a safe and nurturing environment for the children and young people they look after.

The following list should be used by the SSW when completing an unannounced visit, taking account of the age and experiences of the children and young people in the home at the time of the visit:

- Who is in the home
- Who is looking after the child
- If the carer is not at home what arrangements have been made for the care of the child.
- Home is warm and clean

- Child's bedroom has appropriate furniture and fittings
- Evidence of age appropriate play materials
- Selection of appropriate foods available including fresh fruit
- Evidence that the child has appropriate clothing
- Appropriate records are kept and stored safely
- Medication and tools are stored safely
- To observe and report on interactions within the home and where possible evidence where foster carers are working towards an agreed plan, i.e. star charts

SSW'S should aim to observe these points where possible in the least obtrusive manner, i.e. noting that a child or young person is appropriately dressed or age appropriate toys were being played with.

Equipment

On approval the Fostering Service will provide you with basic equipment necessary to care for children within your preferred age range of children.

All purchases must be made either through or with the agreement of your supervising social worker.

Children with disabilities may also be provided with more specialist equipment.

Respite Care

Respite care can be provided where this meets the needs of the child and provides placement stability. Regular respite should be provided by consistent foster carer givers wherever possible.

The fostering service promotes the need for children to develop strong attachment to a consistent care giver. Respite should only be provided as part of the child's Care Plan.

This would not be considered good practice for babies and children under three years old.

Role of the Supervising Social Worker

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 CWDC certificate of completion by their first annual review, or soon after if extra support is required.
2. Provide links to the Foster Carers' Handbook, Statement of Purpose, and Children's Guide to Fostering and Copy of Policies on the website or provide paper copies of these if more appropriate.
3. Give Foster Carer Agreement to the carer: 2 copies to be signed and one returned and placed on the carer's file
4. Support carers with any specialist issues for disabled children for e.g. support in completing applications for Carers' Allowance, Disabled Living Allowance etc.

Pre-Placement

1. Complete risk assessments surrounding bedroom sharing, mixing with other children in home, etc. (S10 of the FNMS 2011 requires that foster homes provide appropriate and safe accommodation and space for each child as well as safe transport. Further each child over three years of age is required to have their own bedroom unless sharing of a bedroom has been explicitly agreed by the placing authority. 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 gives 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. Assist carers in dealing with other relevant services such as health and education.
7. Discuss financial issues with the carer: allowances, pocket money, leisure activities, toiletries and traveling etc. and the importance of complying with the terms of Trafford Council's insurance policy for carers
8. 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.
9. Exchange contact numbers with all relevant members of the family, including out of hours support.
10. That arrangements are made for the provision of specialist equipment for disabled children.
11. Set date of first visit after the placement.
12. Let the social worker for a child already in placement know when another child is placed.

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 in place.
2. Take part in any meeting relating to the foster family. Be involved in interviews/support as agreed.
3. Ensure the supervising social worker and the foster carers receive invitations to child's Statutory Reviews and Child Protection Conferences, and attend when appropriate.
4. Prepare for and attend Foster Carer Review Meetings.

5. Ensure training programme is updated and accessed by carers and carers' family and children.
6. Visit regularly.
7. Make unannounced visits as required.
8. Update DBS checks on members of the family every three years, including those reaching sixteen years of age, and other persons who come to live at the home, who are age 18 and over.
9. Update medicals on the carers every 3 years or as necessary.
10. Record contact with carers.
11. Provide reports for Panel as required under the relevant procedures.
12. Where appropriate contribute to Court Reports as agreed with child's social worker.

At The End of Placements

1. Support the family as much as possible in what can be a very difficult time.
2. 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.
3. Assist the foster carer to complete their end of placement report if required.
4. Attend End of Placement Reviews which are held when a placement ends in an unplanned way.

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 carers aware of their own possible conflict of interests and inform them of where they can seek alternative support and advice from Fostertalk or the Fostering Network.

Reviews of Foster Carers

We would like you to be actively involved in your review and you should be given the opportunity to complete your own report to provide feedback about your experience and any concerns, comments or compliments you have about the service.

Foster carers' approval must be reviewed **at least** annually in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011 and The Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Where reviews need to be delayed, **in exceptional circumstances**, this will require the permission of the Family Placement Team Manager or the Team Leader.

The Supervision records which are completed quarterly will help to inform the review and aid the Supervising Social Worker with the report. Your Supervising Social Worker will ask the social workers for any children placed to write a report which they will share with you. The child (ren) placed with you will also be asked for their views which will be shared with you and included in the report. The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for the child(ren) placed may also be asked to write a report.

Your Supervising Social Worker will collate all the reports and write a report in which they will review how the past year has been for you including strengths and skills you have demonstrated, challenges you have met and support and training needs for you for the coming year. You will read this report and sign it. They will also update the Health and Safety checklist, Safer Caring policy and your Personal Development Plan in discussion with you.

All first reviews must be held at the panel and foster carers will be invited to attend. After the first review subsequent reviews will be held in the foster carers' home and chaired by the manager nominated to this role.

Reviews where the Supervising Social Worker is recommending a change in approval or where there have been serious concerns or allegations will be held at the panel and the foster carer will be invited to attend.

Contact

The laws under which Children's social services work clearly states that local authorities have a duty to promote contact between children who are looked after, their parents, relatives and other people who are important to the child. Clear expectations of promoting contact are also outlined in Section 10 of the Fostering national minimum standards. In Trafford we now call this 'Family Time'.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf

The Importance of Family Time

For the majority of children their interests will be best served by efforts to sustain or create links with their birth families. Even when there is no minimal or no contact, Social Workers and carers need to address the need to keep a child connected with their family background and to help them develop a sense of identity.

Philosophy and Principles

The fundamental principle on which all decisions relating to contact are based is that for most children who are in care it is in their best interests to have contact with their family of origin and friends.

Other key principles are:

- Family Time plans must be an integral component of every Care Plan and Placement Plan.
- Children's and parents' views must be sought and given weight in determining family time arrangements
- Children have a right to be protected from harmful family time
- Consideration must be given to the need for and benefits of appropriate family time when considering the suitability of placements
- Financial support, may be available for children, birth parents and carers to ensure family time takes place at the desired frequency and in the most appropriate place.
- Contact can only be prevented or curtailed by Court Order, or in emergencies, by the responsible local authority for a limited period.

Contact Arrangements

Family Time arrangements are to be discussed prior to or upon placement. The agreed arrangements must be clearly detailed on the Childs Information Record and Care Plan.

The Social Worker must ensure that the foster carer, parents and child are clear what arrangements for Family Time are, including any restrictions. All contact should take into account the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned. **Any restrictions on contact for the protection of the child must be passed on to the foster carer.**

Family Time refers to letters, telephone calls and e-mails as well as face to face contact. Contact with family can be particularly important for children in care and all carers are expected to make every effort to promote and facilitate the agreed contact arrangements.

For some children Family Time will need to be supervised, this should be clearly documented. Foster carers should be informed of these arrangements prior to placement and consulted prior to any new arrangements.

Family Time can take place through visits, telephone calls and letters and children should be reminded of this.

Some Family Time will be arranged to take place at a local Contact centre.

Recording the Outcomes of Contact Arrangements

While the child's Social Worker will be responsible for monitoring the Family Time plans, foster carers also have a significant role to play.

Even when Family Time takes place away from the foster home the carer will be the person best placed to judge the impact on the child. Children in Care Services therefore expect that carers record the outcome of contact arrangements and their perceived impact on the child. In accordance with Section 9 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 any significant reaction that the child has to contact must be communicated to the child's social worker.

When directly involved in Family Time carers should record as a minimum:

- How the child was before Family Time – were there any noticeable behavioural changes, concerns or feelings?
- Whether the Family Time went as planned, who was involved, timing, place and activities.
- What happened during Family Time – greetings, farewells, physical contact, behaviours, tasks, conversations, nonverbal communication, feelings and any surprises.
- What happened after Family Time– child's behavior and feelings
- Areas of progress and areas of concern.

When not directly involved in Family Time carers should record:

- How the child was before Family Time – were there any noticeable behavior changes, concerns or feelings?

- What happened after Family Time – child’s behavior and feelings
- Areas of progress and areas of concern.
- Carers may be asked to undertake and record specific tasks during contact and such expectations must be recorded in the Placement Plan.

Education

Children placed with foster carers are likely to have experienced disruption in their education through moving schools or difficult family circumstances. They may have been unable to learn due to anxiety, stress or fear as a result of distressing and/or abusive experiences. It is essential that foster carers be proactive in ensuring children and young people reach their full potential by working in close partnership with Schools and Social Workers.

Foster carers play an extremely important role in the education of their children. Committed parents express preferences for schools and appeal against decisions which they feel will harm their children’s future chances; they attend parent’s evenings and sports days; they expect to be involved and consulted in all aspects of their children’s education. These partnerships and close home/school links are equally important for children and young people in care.

Education for Children in Care

All schools have a designated teacher for Looked After Children; this is often the Head teacher or the Deputy Head or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). The role of the designated teacher is to assess and identify the learning needs of the child, to ensure that all teachers respond positively and with sensitivity to the child’s needs, liaise with social workers and to promote good home-school links. They are also responsible for ensuring they have a current Personal Education Plan (P.E.P.) and that it is updated on a 6 monthly basis.

The Children Centre Teacher is the designated teacher for children attending playgroup, day nursery or child minder. For children not attending any education setting the Health Visitor will complete the Early Years Personal and Learning Development Plan.

Personal Education Plan

All looked after children must have a current Personal Education Plan (P.E.P.) The PEP must be completed within 20 days of a child/young person coming into care and/or starting a new school/education setting. This is to be reviewed every 6 months with the Care Plan. A copy is to be kept on file and at school. The PEP states the legal status, name and contact details of social worker and placement. A PEP meeting is necessary to share information; it should make reference to other existing education plans such as Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP), pastoral support plans, and reference to the SEN statement. Carers should be fully involved in this process.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Where children do not make adequate progress in school there is a need for the school to do something different or additional. Additional adult support can be sought and reviewed through an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), which is looked during Personal Education Planning meetings (PEP's)

Leaving Care

For those that continue on to university, there would be financial support available and they would continue to receive after care support up to the age of 24, otherwise this service would cease at 21. Trafford will also provide vacation accommodation to

those who are living away at University. Whilst at University, the young person will receive a weekly living allowance, a bursary and a laptop computer.

Health

It is important the health needs of children placed are met, and that foster carers fully understand their role in ensuring children and young people are physically well and emotionally secure. Foster carers lifestyles must ensure children and young people placed will thrive, develop and grow. The foster carer must be prepared to work with the child's social worker and relevant health professionals to ensure unmet needs prior to placement are considered and addressed. Health Visitors, School Nurses, GPs and the Children Looked After Nurses. The Child's Placement Information Record must state what arrangements have been made or need to be made regarding a child's health needs. The child's Care Plan must identify any health issues. Health information must be shared with the foster carer at the matching stage and again at the placement agreement meeting.

Trafford has a Specialist Nurse for children in care who help to promote and coordinate the health care needs of children and makes sure that health visitors, school nurses and professionals that come in contact with them have the relevant information about their health and background. The nurse can also make sure that their records follow them and that they don't miss out on specialist appointments because they have moved placement. The child's social worker may liaise with the nurse to follow up any health issues. The nurse is a useful resource for foster carers who have any queries. The nurse oversees the health assessments for looked after children and young people.

Health Assessments

Local authorities should act as good parents in relation to the health of children in their care. This involves health surveillance and assessment, health care and health promotion.

Children and young people should have an assessment of their health either just before their placement, or within 28 days of entering into care. As a foster carer you should be given information about the child's health needs, such as:

- Any current illnesses or disabilities
- Any medication that the child is prescribed
- Any on-going treatment and outstanding appointments
- Any allergies that the child may have
- When the child is due to see the dentist
- What illnesses the child has previously had
- What immunisations a child has previously had
- Whether there are any family illnesses, which potentially may impact on the child's health

The above information may be recorded in the child's Personal Health Record (PHR) and you should have a copy of this information. This should go with the child to any new placements.

Ongoing Health Assessments

As well as at the start of a placement, children and young people should have on-going health assessments, every 6 months for children under five years old and annually for children and young people over five years of age.

Some young people may refuse to attend their health assessment. In these cases, efforts should be made to encourage the young person to attend. They should be given accurate information about what will be included in a health assessment and

the degree of confidentiality that will be observed. The designated nurses may assist in providing information for the child.

Even if they choose not to attend one health assessment, they should be given opportunities to attend subsequent health assessments. Additionally if the child has a specific medical condition, you may require training and advice as to how to deal with it. This information should be provided by a suitably medically trained person and written guidelines should also be provided. This should be regularly reviewed and refresher training provided. Ask your social worker about this.

General Practitioner/Dentist Registration

All children who are looked after must be registered with a General Practitioner and a Dentist. Foster carers may be asked to arrange this. Children should remain registered with their own GP or dentist if possible. The designated nurses may assist with finding a dentist.

Consent

Before any medicine or medical treatment is given to the young person the service must have appropriate, informed consent. Getting this consent is the role of the young person's social worker. All children and young people who are looked after should also have a consent to medical treatment form; this is included in the Placement Information Record which is part of the placement plan. You must ensure you have this signed when caring for any child ideally before accepting the child or young person. Consent to routine treatments can never be given solely by a foster carer, unless delegated and recorded within the Placement or Care Planning Process on the Delegated Authority Checklist. However, in cases of emergency, treatments can be given without consent, if any delay would cause the young person's wellbeing to suffer. These emergency treatments are limited to dealing with the immediate problem. If consent for routine treatments cannot be obtained, either because it has been refused, or because a person with Parental Responsibility

cannot be found, the service can make an application to court for permission to treat the young person.

Storage and Administration of Medication

Safe storage of medication is essential, ideally in a locked cabinet out of sight and reach of children. This is monitored through supervision. Under no circumstances should medication or drugs be left in a place where children can get hold of them. Carers are expected to complete records when they administer any medication or when there has been a medical incident i.e. hospital admission, consultant/ GP appointment. Upon approval your Supervising Social Worker will provide you with all the required medication recording documents

Guidance around the safe storage and administration of all medication both non prescribed and prescribed can be found via the following link

[http://www.proceduresonline.com/trafford/cs/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/storage_admin_medicine%20\(2019\).doc](http://www.proceduresonline.com/trafford/cs/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/storage_admin_medicine%20(2019).doc)

Accidents and Emergencies

In the event of a child needing urgent medical attention the foster carer should accompany the child either to the GP or local Accident and Emergency department. They should notify the child's social worker as soon as possible to enable them to inform the child's parents, and keep them informed thereafter. If out of normal office hours the foster carer should inform EDT and where appropriate the child's parents.

All accidents and emergencies should be recorded on a Notification of Serious Incident form and reported to the Fostering Service by the foster carer, the link to which is provided below.

https://www.proceduresonline.com/trafford/cs/client_supplied/accident_illness_report.doc

The parents may be afforded the opportunity to attend and accompany their child at such times if appropriate. Records must be kept in relation to all accidents and any medical advice, treatment and guidance noted. It is important that if carers do not understand the advice given, clarification is asked for and assistance sought.

Accidents should be recorded in your foster carer's daily record.

The Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker should be informed as soon as possible.

The record should include:

- How the accident happened?
- What injuries were sustained?
- What action was taken?

If the child or young person required medical attention ensure you take the relevant medical consent form. The child's social worker should be informed as soon as possible if you have needed to seek any medical treatment in response to the accident. If they are not available the child's team manager should be informed and your supervising social worker. Outside office hours you should call EDT.

Preparing for Independence

The statutory obligations on local authorities for leaving care services are set out in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children (Leaving Care) (England) Regulations 2001.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes require us to ensure that our services help to develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Planning for Adulthood

Throughout childhood some young people will have formed secure attachments, benefited from a high level of academic achievement, have a career and

accommodation to move on to and have the on-going support of family or former carers.

Others will be less well prepared. Some with severe learning disabilities may never be able to live independently, while some with poor parenting experience or a disrupted childhood will be vulnerable to substance misuse, homelessness, early pregnancy, unemployment, social isolation or criminal behaviour.

Whatever the individual young person's background, everyone involved in their care has a role to play in preparing and planning for as successful a transition to adulthood as is possible.

Whenever a child or young person becomes looked after, social workers should be planning from the outset for their eventual discharge from care.

Independent Living Skills Workbook

Every young person should have an Independent Living Skills Workbook that they can use along with their Personal Advisor and foster carer to think about the skills they need to develop for independence and evidence how they are working towards these.

Pathway Plans

Responsible authorities are required under the Children (Leaving Care) (England) Regulations 2001 to carry out a needs assessment for each eligible child, with a view to determining what advice, assistance and support they should provide both while they are looking after them and when they have ceased to look after them. The needs assessment will then be the basis for preparing the Pathway Plan for each young person. The plan must be recorded in writing. The responsible authority must keep a copy and must provide one for the young person in a form that is accessible to them. The Pathway Plan should be a major part of young people's planning for the future. It should include their hopes and ambitions as well as smaller goals for them to reach along the way.

Each young person will be central to drawing up their own plan, setting out their own goals and identifying with their personal adviser. We will seek to ensure that at all times young people are consulted about their future and encouraged to be actively involved in the decision making process and implementation of the Pathway Plan.

We will work to ensure that the plan is owned by the young person and is able to respond to their changing needs and ambitions. It should look ahead at least as far as the young person's 21st birthday and will be in place beyond that where the young person is in a programme of education or training which takes them past that age.

The Pathway Plan must cover:

- The nature and level of contact and personal support to be provided, and by whom, to the young person.
- Details of the accommodation the young person is to occupy.
- A detailed plan for the education or training of the young person.
- How the responsible authority will assist the young person in relation to employment or other purposeful activity or occupation.
- The support to be provided to enable the young person to develop and sustain appropriate family and social relationships.
- A programme to develop the practical and other skills necessary for the young person to live independently.
- The financial support to be provided to the young person, in particular where it is to be provided to meet their accommodation and maintenance needs.
- The health needs, including any mental health needs, of the young person, and how they are to be met.
- Contingency plans for action to be taken by the responsible authority should the Pathway Plan for any reason cease to be effective.

The Pathway Plan must also record key details such as the name, age and contact details of the young person, the name and contact details of the personal adviser and those of any other people who will be actively involved in delivering aspects of the plan. It will note the date due for review.

The Role of the Foster Carer

All carers have key formal and informal roles in the preparation of young people for independent or semi-independent living.

We expect carers to prepare for and attend all relevant meetings in respect and take a pro-active approach in the development and implementation of such plans.

Carers are best placed of all those in the young person's network to help prepare them for independence on a day-to-day basis. For some young people this will involve helping them complete practical tasks such as making job or housing applications. Young people about to move into semi-independent or independent accommodation may need help in preparing a budget, or notifying relevant agencies such as energy companies of the move.

Once again, we expect carers to be pro-active and positive in carrying out such tasks, whilst balancing the need to encourage the young person to take on increasing levels of responsibility for their own life.

We also expect carers to be aware of and take opportunities to provide children of any age with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills.

Independent Living arrangements

Where it is decided that a young person's needs post 18 can be met with a greater degree of independence, with the carers' and the young person's agreement, the young person will remain living with their former foster carer under an Independent Living Arrangement.

Where this has been decided, the Child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker will arrange to undertake a financial assessment of the foster carer; this should include what benefits the young person will also be entitled to.

Agreement should also be reached with the young person as to what contribution they should make to the placement from the money they will receive.

An agreement should also be reached as to the expectations of the carers and of the young person once this new agreement begins.

Consideration and support can be given to the carer and young person to draw up a written agreement between them if this is required. Such an agreement however remains a private one between the carer and young person.

Once the financial assessment and any agreements have been completed, the plan should be discussed at the child's Independent Review.

Supported Lodgings Placements

Where it is felt that a young person would benefit from greater support, a needs assessment will be conducted by the young person's social worker. The conversion of a foster care placement to a supported lodgings placement may be considered. A member of the Supported Lodgings team will visit the carer with the carer's Supervising Social Worker to outline the process of approval by the Supported lodgings team.

During this visit the carer's will also be provided with advice about how their tax allowance and benefits entitlement will be impacted by any conversion to a supported lodgings placement.

An assessment of the carer for approval as a supported lodgings carer will be completed and presented to the supported lodgings panel for approval.

Moving Out

Where young people have indicated that they wish to leave their foster placement post 18, this must be clearly documented on the child's file, along with the support and information that has been given to seek to maintain the young person in their current placement.

This decision should be clearly documented and alternative accommodation sought appropriately.

It is expected that in these circumstances, all of those involved, including foster carers, will continue to provide support to a young person even once they have moved on from their current placement. Consideration must be given to what support is required in order for this to be possible.

Complaints and Allegations Against Foster Carers

The Children Act 1989 places a duty to investigate all allegations and complaints involving children wherever they are living.

Complaints Against a Foster Carer

A complaint about a foster carer may be made by a fostered child, a parent (or anyone with parental responsibility for the child), a foster carer, or anyone else with a legitimate interest in a child's welfare. A complaint may involve a view about a carer's approach to the care of a fostered child or the way in which they respond to a child's needs or behaviour.

There are three key principles underlying the way that complaints against foster carers are investigated in Trafford. These are:

a) In all cases the needs of the child in care will always take precedence over other considerations.

b) While the Fostering Regulations 2011 make provision for the use of the ultimate sanction of a carer's deregistration, where possible the local authority will seek to work with carers to implement change and improvement.

c) It is anticipated that wherever possible, issues and less serious complaints made against foster carers will be dealt with informally and only once this has been exhausted will a formal process be initiated.

The Fostering Service will seek to minimise, as much as possible, the stressful situation facing carers going through this process. Throughout any investigation under these procedures..

Allegations Against a Foster Carer

An allegation may be made by anyone: a member of the public, a health or education professional, a member of a fostered child's family or by a child. An allegation involves an accusation of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.

In cases where an allegation has been made Trafford's **Child in Need-Child Protection Procedures** will take precedence over any other procedures.

Categories of allegations:

Proven

The allegation is supported by fact and found to be true.

False

An allegation where evidence has shown to be untrue.

Unsubstantiated

An allegation which cannot be proven to be true or false.

When an allegation is made against a foster carer it can be a very stressful time. Your supervising social worker may not be able to discuss the allegation during the investigation period and this can result in carers feeling isolated and unsupported. Foster carers will have access to support from an independent source, including access to a telephone helpline and an independent advocate.

You can access support from Fostertalk if you are the subject of a complaint or allegation. This is both telephone support and support in person from an independent advocate.

<http://www.fostertalk.org>

01527 836 910

Missing from Care Guidance

Please visit our website and view the quick reference guide about dealing with missing children. It is important that you follow this procedures carefully and keep us informed.

<https://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering/docs/Missing-Procedure.pdf>

Every child or young person who goes missing is entitled to an Independent Return Interview. This is a conversation with a professional independent from their family, carers and social care to explore the reasons why they went missing, what happened while they were missing and what can be done to prevent them going missing again. For Trafford children accommodated in Trafford, or within 15 miles, either Talkshop or Gorsehill Studios provide this service in response to Police information. The interviews are a statutory duty and should take place within 72 hours of the child or young person returning. Please make every effort to facilitate this taking place when the services contact you. mfhtalkshop@trafford.gov.uk 0161 912 2453

Talkshop provide a range of other services including a sexual health clinic, general open access Drop-In and mentoring for young people who have experienced or are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Talkshop can also provide *Stay Safe* packs for young people who frequently go missing. <https://www.facebook.com/Talkshoptrafford> 0161 912 2453

Greater Manchester Please have clear procedures to follow when investigating children who go missing from care, the link to which is provided below. Once a young person has been located and returned the police will complete a safety and wellbeing check visit.

https://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_missing_home_care.html

Supporting Children To Move On

Most fostering requires carers to look after children and young people temporarily until they move on. There are various routes that can be taken after a child comes into the care system: they can return to their parents or extended families, they can reach the age when they become independent and move to their own place, or they can move on to adoption or permanency with other carers.

Whichever route is taken, the child needs support in making the transition to their new home and the foster carer plays a significant part in making the move a success. All moves need to be managed carefully and to take into account the child's age and ability to cope with change themselves.

Working with Birth Families

Those children returning to their birth families will be looking forward to the move but also nervous about whether things will really work out and they need lots of reassurance from their foster carer that this is the right decision for them and their family. Foster carers will need to build good working relationships with the family members themselves, be they parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, sometimes older siblings. Often in reality foster carers may have reservations about the plan for a child to return home, and they can voice these views at the planning stage, along with the other professionals. If, however, a decision has been made to return a child home, it is the carer's job to work alongside the social workers and family to make a success of the move. This can be tough, feelings can be strong and it is at times like this that a foster carer really needs the support of their own social workers to help them manage the process in a professional manner.

Keeping in Touch

Some foster carers stay in touch with some of the children and young people they have fostered. They can provide valuable support to young people to help them

make sense of their past experiences in care. This should be discussed on a case by case basis with your supervising social worker and the child's social worker.

Moving Children on to Adoptive Families

Once adoption is decided as a possible option for a child the adoption social worker's role is to gather information from the birth parents and the foster carer for the purpose of completing an Adoption Medical and the Child Permanence Report (CPR).

Before an adoptive placement can be pursued the Agency Decision Maker must recommend that it is in the child's best interest that they Should Be Placed for Adoption (SHOBPA). As the child's foster carer you will be asked to complete a full report, regarding the child for the CPR. This report will detail the child's behaviour, relationships, personality and any other relevant issues. It is important that the report is as detailed as possible and gives an accurate picture of the needs of the child. If you wish your supervising social worker can assist you in completing this report. The CPR also contains a full history of the child and details all social work involvement. The information in the CPR informs the Agency Decision Maker to assist in the decision making.

Once the decision is made that the child should be placed for adoption, the Area Team Social Worker will continue with the Court process until a Placement Order is obtained.

The adoption social worker will need to visit the child in your home and interview you about the child's needs, behaviour and other relevant matters and the sort of family that would best meet the child's needs. The number of visits will vary according to the assessed needs of the child. The information that you provide will be very important in helping the adoption social workers identify which of the adoptive families they are considering may be most suitable for the child. It may be that a

family cannot be identified immediately and plans have to be made about advertising the child in publications such as “Children Who Wait”.

Once a family has been identified arrangements will be made for you to meet the prospective adoptive parents. This will be before the Adoption Panel has met to consider the match. At the meeting with the prospective adopters it is important that you give an honest and thorough picture of the child. Adoptive parents need all the information available to enable them to parent the child appropriately and meet the child’s needs.

Very occasionally, foster carers have not wanted to impart negative information as they felt it might harm the child’s chances of a new permanent family. It is much better to be totally honest so adopters are aware of all the issues and can make informed choices about whether or not to proceed with a placement. Knowledge of how a child operates in a current family can prevent disruptions occurring at a later date.

Once the Adoption Panel have made the decision that the match should go ahead, then a “Life Appreciation Meeting” will be held to which you will be invited. The purpose of the Information meeting is to:

- a) Get together as many people as possible who have been involved in the child’s life, i.e. past and present foster carers, teachers, health visitors, social workers etc.
- b) Share all the available information about the child with the prospective adoptive parents.
- c) Identify any gaps in our knowledge of the child’s history.
- d) Identify who are the significant people in the child’s life.

Again, it is important that you are present and make a contribution, as often foster carers hold key pieces of information about a child which may never have been recorded.

The “Life Appreciation Meeting” will be followed by a meeting which will formally plan the introduction of the child to its prospective adoptive parents.

Introducing a child is a very demanding task and emotions are often very high on both sides. Feelings of grief, separation and loss can be experienced by the child and the foster carers. Adoptive parents can often feel very guilty about “taking” the child from the foster carers. What research tells us is that where all the adults can work well together, in the interests of the child, then the move on will be positive for the child and will bode well for the future.

As the foster carer for the child you will be asked to have the first part of the introductions in your home, where the child feels most safe and secure.

This will involve the adoptive parents spending considerable amounts of time in your home with the child. This may involve the adopters sharing meals, helping the child with its routines, reading bedtime stories etc. This is a very intrusive time for foster carers, but it is an essential part of the moving on process. It is important that a child receives the “emotional permission” from its current carers that it is safe to move on.

The second part of the introductions usually involves the child spending increasing amounts of time with the prospective adopters. As the child’s carer you will be expected to spend some time with the child at the adoptive parents’ home during the initial part of this stage of the process. This is to help the child feel safe and secure when moving on to the next stage of the introductions.

During the course of the introductions, it is also important that the plan is not changed without full discussion with the workers concerned. Experience tells us that it is essential that good communication is maintained by all parties.

In the latter third of the introductions a Review of Introductions Meeting will be held. The purpose of this meeting is:

- a) To gather all parties’ views of the introductions so far.
- b) To establish whether the introductions should continue, if not, to determine how they should end.

c) If the introductions have gone well and dates are set for the child to move in then plans are made for this, to establish that all tasks are complete to enable the child to move.

At the Review of Introductions Meeting it is very important that you are able to share your feelings about how the introductions have gone, both from your own and the child's point of view. The adoption social worker, your supervising social worker, and the adoptive parents will also be present at the meeting. If you have reservations and feel uncomfortable about sharing those reservations at the meeting please discuss them with your supervising social worker beforehand. You should feel able to discuss any reservations that you have at any stage of the process with your worker. It is much better for the child that matters are raised in an open and honest way prior to a placement than if the placement occurs and later disrupts, because of issues that occurred during the introductions which were not discussed. Equally, adoptive parents need to be open and honest about their feelings and reservations if they have any.

If everything has progressed well and final "move in" date is set then you will need to give the message to the child that "I want you to be with your new Mummy and Daddy (or whatever combination), this is what I want for you". It is often the final part of the "emotional permission" to move from the foster carers. If you have other children in your care or relatives who have had a deal of input with the child, you will be given a gap in the introduction plan to allow them to say their "goodbyes".

During introductions you will have been sending the child's belongings little by little home with the adopters. On the day of the move, the adoption social worker will meet the adopters at your address, usually at around 9am to oversee the move. This will need to be done quickly with the minimum of fuss as you will undoubtedly be feeling very emotional. You will need to stay positive for the child but will want to close your door and maybe shed a few tears. You will probably need some support on hand.

Adoptive parents are asked to telephone carers on the night the child moves in to let the carers know how the child is.

Adoptive parents may, on occasion, telephone you and ask for your advice and assistance, as the person who previously 'parented' the child.

It will be important for you to have a one off contact with the child once he or she has settled into the adoptive placement as the child will have suffered numerous losses in its life and it is important that links are maintained at this stage. It will of course depend on the age and history of the child as to whether some sort of contact continues after that.

Foster carers are an invaluable part of the moving on process and their input contributes immensely to the success of adoptive placements for the children in their care.

Contact Numbers & Email

The Placements Team

Trafford Town Hall Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0TH

Service Managers Fostering & Adoption

Linda Crabtree 0161 912 3557 linda.crabtree@trafford.gov.uk working days: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning.

Nichola Doyle 0161 912 2755 nichola.doyle@trafford.gov.uk working days Wednesday afternoon and Thursday Friday

Team Leaders :

Andrea Hay 0161 912 3529 andrea.hay@trafford.gov.uk

Alice Taylor 0161 912 3564 alice.taylor@trafford.gov.uk

Michelle Halliday 0161 912 2967 michelle.halliday1@trafford.gov.uk

Business Support: 0161 912 5050

Multi Agency Referral and Assessment Team (MARAT)

Trafford Town Hall Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0TH

Team Manager: Elaine Harvey 0161 912 5022 elaine.harvey@trafford.gov.uk

Customer Service Advisor: 0161 912 5125

North Area Family Support Team

Trafford Town Hall Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0TH

Service Manager: Jennifer Leveridge 0161 912 5002
jenny.leveridge@trafford.gov.uk

Team Leader: Emma Mosley 0161 912 5011 emma.mosley@trafford.gov.uk

Team Leader: Richard Nelson 0161 912 3304 richard.nelson@trafford.gov.uk

Business Support 0161 912 5045

West Area Family Support Team

Cornhill Clinic, 59 Cornhill Road, Urmston, Manchester, M41 5SZ

Service Manager: Sue Hulm 0161 746 3810; susan.hulm@trafford.gov.uk

Team Leader: John Chisnall 0161 746 3850 john.chisnall@trafford.gov.uk

Business Support: 0161 746 3811

South Area Support Team

Sale Waterside, Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale, M33 7ZF

Service Manager: Moya Murray 0161 912 5039; moya.murray@trafford.gov.uk

Team Leaders: Cordie Gwilym 0161 912 2967 cordie.gwilym@trafford.gov.uk

Business Support: 0161 912 5021

Children with Complex and Additional Needs Team

Sale Waterside, Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale, M33 7ZF

Service Manager : Richard Johnson 0161 912 2060 richard.johnson@trafford.gov.uk

Team Leader: Theresa Dearn 0161 912 5767 theresa.dearn@trafford.gov.uk

Business Support: Irene Davies 0161 912 2060

Children's Rights

Trafford Town Hall Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0TH

Advocacy & Engagement Officer: Mark Bailey 0161 912 5094
mark.bailey@trafford.gov.uk

Hayeswater Contact Centre

Hayeswater Road ,Davyhulme, Urmston M41 7BL

Centre Manager: Joanne Cartwright 0161 912 2877
joanne.cartwright@trafford.gov.uk

Deputy Manager: Dawn Oldham 0161 912 2875 dawn.oldham@trafford.gov.uk
Business Support 0161 912 2875

Anna Lomas – Strategic Lead for Children in Care anna.lomas@trafford.gov.uk 0161 912 4028

Emergency Duty Team

(To contact in an emergency out of office hours)

0161 912 2020

Healthy Young Minds

Trafford Town Hall Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0TH

Clinical Psychologist Ruth Goldwyn 0161 912 3378; ruth.goldwyn@trafford.gov.uk

Have Your Say Foster

Chair Roger Finn

Vice Chair Sarah Dela-Hoyde

Fostertalk

01527 836 910

<http://www.fostertalk.org>

Placements Team Contact Details

Family Placement Team	Designation	Mobile Number	Desk Phone	Working days
Linda Crabtree	Service Manager	07786 117 814	912-3557	Mon, Tue, Wed am
Nichola Doyle	Team Leader	07752 667 455	912-2755	Wed am, Thurs, Fri
Andrea Hay	Team Leader General Carers	07760 167 178	912-3529	Full time
Alice Taylor	Team Leader	07989 227 308	912-3564	Mon, Wed,

	Adoption & SGO's			Thurs, Fri
Michelle Halliday	Team Leader Connected Persons	TBC	912 5279	Full time
Sophia Mhar	Senior Practitioner	07786 117 832	912-3305	Full time
Michelle Oxley	Senior Practitioner	07966 169 216	912 4077	Full time
Mags Holohan	SSW	07805 758 990	912 4284	Full time
Helen Emmet	SSW	07805 758 991	912-3543	Mon, Tues, Wed
Kay Marritt	SSW	07890 518 364	912-3350	Mon, Wed am.
Anna Whitworth	SSW	0777 931 9778	912-3090	Full time
Marie O'Brien	SSW	07834 869 696	912-5266	Mon, Tue
Ismaa Iqbal	SSW	07866 983 983	912-3528	Full time
Sue Ann Olbinson	SSW	07866 984 045	912 1921	Wed, Thurs, Fri
Alison Williams	Adoption children's SW	07811 970 419	912 5518	Full time
Katy Ellaway	Adoption children's SW		912 2792	Full time
Elaine Wright	Adoption children's SW		912 3512	Wed, Thurs Fri am.
Zoe Allen	SSW	07748 267 000	912 2792	Mon, Tues Wed Thurs.
Christian Nkurunziza	SSW	07966 249 426	912 4690	Full time
Jane Weston	SSW	07866 983 986	912 2828	Career break returning in 2020.
Julie James	SSW		912 3556	Full Time
Kelly Allan	SSW		912 3520	Tues, Wed
Nancy Blake	SSW	07976 712 863	912 2517	Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri.
Liz Williams	Recruitment Officer	07773 175 633	912 3558	Full time
Jon Hughes	Trainer	07814 227 558	912 2448	Mon, Tues, Wed