



# Services for Children, Young People and Families

## **CHILDREN IN CARE Introductions and Placement of Children (FOSTER CARE)**

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## **Introduction**

Foster carers and the placements they provide for care for children is a part of the overall network of services for children.

Section 20 Children Act 1989 places a duty on a Local Authority to provide accommodation for a child ' who appears to them to require accommodation ' as a result of:

- there being no person who has parental responsibility for him/her
- his being lost or having been abandoned
- the person who has been caring for him/her being prevented from doing so( whether or not permanently ,and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care.

The Local Authority also has a duty to provide accommodation to Children and young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order.

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 opportunity to express their wishes and feelings.

Each child will be different and will need to be treated differently. 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.

## **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)

Social worker tasks:

All referrals for planned placements are taken to the Resource Panel and if agreed a foster placement is required a referral is made to the Family Placement Team.

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.
- Placement Information Record

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. The decision if to bring a child will need the agreement of a Head of Service.

When a placement is needed the referral and risk assessment should be made to the Family Placement Team

- If **Out of Hours** all admissions must go through EDT (Emergency Duty Team). EDT are to contact the On Call Manager prior to any Placement.
- The family placement 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 FPT 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 family placement team manager and the approval of the Head of Service (Children in Care)

## **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 are 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.

- 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.

## Placements

- All relevant documentation and information forwarded to the foster carer prior to placement. Foster carers should keep the information safe in the lockable container. The foster carer must check the Child's Risk Assessment and be satisfied that they are able to meet any control measures to reduce risk.
- Young people and their families should receive a copy of the Fostering service Statement of Purpose, and the Fostering Services Children's Guide.
- Show the young person and their family around the home pointing out different rooms and what they are used for.
- Personal belongings are important and the child's belongings must be respected
- Ensure any medication is accurately recorded and stored correctly.
- Make arrangements for the Social Worker or family to bring any forgotten items that the child requests.