

Parent and Child Foster Placement Guidance

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Document Summary

This parent and child fostering guidance has been written to ensure that parent and child foster homes provided by Suffolk Fostering Service are in line with legislation, national policy, and good practice guidance.

It aims to provide a shared understanding for foster carers, social workers, and parents about the roles and expectations of all parties involved in a parent and child provision, including the services that the parent and the child will receive.

Other professionals, in the trusted network, will also find this guidance helpful in understanding expectations.

We will, on request, produce this policy or parts of it into other languages and formats so that everyone can use and comment upon its content.

Version Control	Reason for revision and summary of changes needed	Date

Parent and Child Foster Placement Guidance

1: RELEVANT GUIDANCE

- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services, DFE 2011
- National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011
- Care planning, Placement & Review Regulations 2010
- Children and Young Person's Act 2008
- The Children Act 1989
- Parent and Child placement Fostering: Coram BAAF 2011.
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Revised February 2011) DFE 201

Useful links:

Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership - <https://www.suffolksp.org.uk/>

[Suffolk Fostering Service Statement of Purpose](#)

2: WHAT IS A PARENT AND CHILD FOSTER PLACEMENT?

Parent-and-child foster care arrangements are used to accommodate parents with their children, either when the mother/father is a care experienced young person (usually under 18yrs) or as a setting for a parenting assessment.

Parent and child foster carers provide a positive, supportive, and supervised environment where parents can develop the skills necessary to be safe and positive role models in their child's life, giving both a brighter future together. Our aim in Suffolk is to help a child and their parent(s) to form attachments and be able to remain together.

The parent will live in the foster home with their child and will maintain responsibility for the care of their child with the foster carer helping them in some areas so they can learn and be able to live independently with their child(ren) in future.

This arrangement will be used when it is considered that a parent and child foster placement is the most suitable way of safeguarding the child(ren) and maintaining the developing relationship between parent and child whilst assessment of parenting is taking place. These kinds of arrangements involve elements of both support and assessment, and also ensures that the foster carer has the ability to "step back" to allow parents to develop their parenting without feeling overly scrutinized, and "step in" to provide parenting guidance or to challenge inappropriate care when required.

Types of Arrangement and Models of support	
Arrangement Types	Models of Support
The parent is a ‘child in care’ <u>and</u> the child is a ‘child in care’	Each will be subject to all the requirements of the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review Regulations 2010 and the Fostering Services Regulation 2011.
The parent is a ‘child in care’, the child is not.	The requirements of the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review Regulations apply to both parent and child but fostering regulations will not apply to the child. This means that the foster carer would not have delegated responsibility for the child adding a complexity to safeguarding arrangements that will need to be considered in the placement agreement.
The parent is <u>not</u> a child in care (e.g. over 18) but the child <u>is</u> a ‘child in care’	In this situation only the child will be subject to all the requirements of the 2010 Care Planning and 2011 Fostering regulations. The parent will be considered as part of the fostering household. This scenario could apply to a parent who is under 18, who has been assessed and not identified as a child in need in their own right.

3: WHEN SHOULD A PARENT AND CHILD FOSTER PLACEMENT BE CONSIDERED?

The need for a parent and child placement should be identified when there has been:

- A pre-birth assessment and discussions have been held and agreed that a parent and child arrangement can help them.
- At a legal strategy meeting which social workers have with their managers and a solicitor
- Within Public Law Outline (PLO) process, when there are huge concerns about the safety of the child or children and there is an ongoing plan which the parents supported by their solicitors agree to work on.
- When the local authority is in court with parents and the court has directed for a parent and child arrangement to be used to support the family.

A parent and child placement should only be considered when:

- The parent agrees to living in a foster home. (It is accepted that this may not be their first preference, but they will need to actively consent to the plan.)

- The parent agrees to the foster carer being involved with assessing their parenting skills.
- The parent agrees to the foster carer providing advice and guidance regarding their parenting.

4: HOW TO REQUEST A PARENT AND CHILD PLACEMENT IN SUFFOLK:

- All requests for fostering placements must be presented to Suffolk's Central Resource Panel (CRP) where the pre-birth assessment and CRP resource request paperwork clearly sets out why a parent and child foster placement is required.
- The paperwork will make clear what are the issues professionals / family members are worried about and how the carer will support.
- A pre-birth assessment is expected in all cases, except where the baby was born before the assessment is started or completed.

If the request is agreed by the County Resource Panel, the Placements and Contracts Team and Fostering Duty will begin the search for a suitable foster family able to provide a Parent and child foster placement.

All Parent and Child requests need to be presented to panel before PLO takes place where we would be outlining the plan to parents.

5: MATCHING:

When considering matching a parent and child with a fostering household there should be a clear understanding of what type of parent and child **arrangement /model of support** the foster carer is being asked to consider and whether they are able to provide the service requested.

There are different parent and child fostering models each with a distinct purpose, suitable for different circumstances and requiring different agreement arrangements.

➤ **Assessment arrangements**

Aim to conclude if the parent can keep the child safe and meet the child's needs to a 'good enough' standard to parenting independently.

➤ **Support arrangements:**

The aim is supporting and helping the parent rather than assessing them. This is usually with very young parents where the foster carer can nurture and teach the parent 'how to parent' prior to them undergoing a full parenting assessment.

6. BEST PRACTICE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

PRE-PLACEMENT PLANNING MEETING & EXPECTATION

- A. **A pre-placement meeting** is essential prior to any placement being made. This meeting will agree the terms of the placement, expectation from each professional and the carer. The meeting should be attended by the parent(s) and supervising social workers and the carer. At the pre-placement meeting, the objectives of the placement and the timescale for assessment should be provided by the parent/child's allocated social worker. Those involved in the meeting must agree on what progress and success looks like, how progress towards meeting the objectives will be tracked, and how success will be measured. Parents over the age of 18 will be subject to a DBS enhanced check and/or Police National Computer check, and the results will be fed into the pre-placement risk assessment. It is good practice for parents to move into the home before the baby is born and a lot of mothers find this more helpful and nurturing as it reduces the stress of moving to a new home immediately the baby is born or from a hospital.
- B. **Pre-Placement Visit:** Ideally the social workers to the child, parents and the supervising social worker should arrange for parents to visit the home prior to the arrangement starting. This is ideal before the baby is born. It is an opportunity for parents to have a feel for the environment and meet the people they will live with. They will be encouraged to ask relevant questions and exchange views with the carer. The parents may use this opportunity to identify the assistance they need, including equipment, and the carer will have enough time to prepare for their arrival.
- C. **Placement planning Meeting: Please follow CYPS Procedure – see [Placement Planning Procedures](#)**

This meeting is usually held within 1-4 days of the new arrangement starting, when parent and child have moved into the home. It allows for parents, carers and social workers to discuss how the arrangement can work, including: practical issues, the models of care and expectations including issues of family time, relationship with the other parent not in the home and any identified risks in the care plan or assessment. The supervising social worker completes the action plans from the meeting and shares with others including the IRO.

In this meeting, the social worker undertaking any ongoing assessment will explain their visiting schedule to see the family and what they will be expecting from both the

parent and the foster carer. It is important to discuss how the carer shares their recording / assessment with parents.

Ideally parents will have printed copies of what they are expected to do and what they should expect from others carer and from the professionals.

Finally, the placement planning meeting must discuss what happens when it is not working well, including how a meeting can be held to resolve difficulties. Parents should know they can also request this meeting themselves and who should attend.

The financial arrangements between the foster carer and parent need to be discussed in the meeting including details of who is responsible for paying for food, clothing, heating, etc. for the parent and the child. It is possible that at the beginning of the arrangement the foster carer will take the primary responsibility for these arrangements and at subsequent reviews the parent will take on gradually more significant responsibility.

The meeting should also discuss clear plans about what can lead to the end of the arrangement. These should include whether the child will remain in the sole care of the foster carer, or whether the child would be moved to an alternative foster carer. If the parent leaves the arrangement the baby can remain in the foster home for a period to ensure planning and a smooth transition.

Following the placement planning meeting, a written agreement can be put together that lists responsibilities of the parent and carer and the services that the parents will expect from the Social Care team.

REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS: There are two types of reviews.

1. The arrangement will be reviewed after a maximum period of 28 days from the time the child (and parent) moves into the home. This will be done in the Child in Care review process, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
2. The Parent and Child Foster care arrangement will be reviewed when the social worker visits the home usually every 4-6 weeks and will meet the child, parents, the carers and any others who are involved.

All professionals must use this opportunity to advise the parent on how well they are doing and about any areas of further development. Any decision-making, regarding extending the arrangement, should be based on any on-going assessments and from all the views of parents, carers and social workers.

ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENT:

The main aim of this arrangement is to check the safe parenting skills of the parent. The foster carer will contribute to this assessment but cannot be the only means of assessment or training in parenting skills.

The assessment of the parent remains the responsibility of the child's allocated social worker, who must co-ordinate a wider multiagency assessment of parenting abilities by involving others like adult social care if they are involved, the Leaving Care social worker and/or workers from mental health services, learning disability, health visitors, family centre and the family nurse partnership. The assessment may be undertaken by an independent Social Worker if ordered by the court.

It is good practice for the carers and the social worker to provide the parent with any information that will assist the parent to safely care for their child. For example, all information presented to the court or to the child's solicitors or court guardian should have been discussed with the parent initially when the record was made or when an event or incident has occurred.

Social workers should ensure that the parent's learning needs and level of understanding are ascertained and they must provide feedback to the parent and the foster carer, sometimes in writing, following any assessment visit.

DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD:

Where the child is subject to either an **ICO** (Interim Care Order) or a **Care Order**, **Parental Responsibility** is shared, and the local authority will need to negotiate with the parent the most appropriate arrangements for exercising their respective parental responsibilities. These arrangements must be discussed, agreed, and recorded in the placement planning meeting.

Where the parent is also 'a child in care' various outcomes could apply. If the parenting assessment concludes that the parent can safely parent the child, then the aims and timescales of the arrangement must be re-negotiated to include clear timescales for moving into independent living, or to another form of supported arrangement not involving fostering.

In a situation where the parent has been assessed as unable to safely care for the child, then by the direction of the Court, or with the agreement of the parent, the child can be moved to a different home. This may also involve a change of arrangement for the parent

if the home is designated as a parent and child arrangement. *It is important to reflect that every effort should be made to keep the child stable in the current home unless it will not meet their needs.*

If the parent and child arrangement is subject to Care Proceedings the child's allocated social worker must seek legal advice to decide if they will need to complete relevant tasks that relate to Placement with Parents procedures.

If the parent leaves the placement before the planned ending, the Leaving Care Team (where relevant) will need to be notified immediately as they will be entitled to advice and guidance.

7: FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FOSTER CARER:

Suffolk Parent and Child foster carers will be paid at tier level 4 (or equivalent) for the parent and tier level 2 for the child. (see attached link to fees and allowances)

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/fostering-allowances-and-fees-2023-2024.pdf>

If both parent and child are a 'child in care' the payment for this will be set up as an activity in the usual way and payment will be made to the foster carer from the Corporate Parenting Boarding out Payment's budget.

If the parent is over 18, payments are set up directly to the foster carer. The foster carer will be paid at tier 4 for the parent, even if they are aged 18 or over, no deductions for benefits are made.

8: ROLE OF THE FOSTER CARER:

The foster carer/s will offer guidance and assistance to the parent in managing all care tasks for the baby. This will involve modelling good parenting, practical support such as accompanying the parent to parent/baby groups, health visiting clinics, shopping etc. The arrangement should provide the parent with a safe and friendly environment in which to learn to provide good enough parenting for their child, independently.

The foster carer will be expected to show the parent how any technical appliances work so that they are able to use cooking and cleaning facilities appropriately. As the arrangement progresses it will be expected that the parent will become more independent.

The foster carer should promote and support the key attachment between child and parent.

The foster carer will be expected to keep a daily record, noting observations of the parent's ability to respond to their baby's needs, manage the routine, and manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform any parenting programme or assessment that has been agreed. The foster carers will be expected to be open and honest about the parent's strengths and difficulties when recording their observations and the parent must be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations with the support of the child's social worker.

The foster carer will provide the parent with a fully furnished bedroom complete with bed, cot, and cot linen and ensure the parent has access to use the sitting room and home entertainment.

The foster carer will make available and provide full use of toys and equipment for both inside and outside the home. (Suffolk fostering service can provide set up costs for new parent and child foster carers).

The foster carer and supervising social worker will complete and provide an updated Family Safer Care Plan in relation to the individual parent and child placement. The foster carer will inform the parent of any household rules and routines and safe caring plan.

The foster carer will be expected to periodically check on the care and safety of the child in placement so must have access to the child 24 hours per day whilst in the home environment.

The foster carers should intervene if the level of risk to the child from a parent would be detrimental to their welfare. Any such intervention will be recorded in detail by the foster carer as soon as possible and discussed with the parents and when required should be discussed with the child's social worker.

The foster carer will always seek medical advice or treatment for any fall or injury that a child has sustained. A report of any injury should be made to the child's social worker and fostering social worker as soon as possible.

The foster carer should support parent child registration with GP and facilitate contact with children's centres and other baby groups in the local community.

The foster carer will respect and give recognition to the importance of a parent and child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, gender, sexuality, and disability.

The foster carer will attend pre-placement meeting, family centre meetings, **Reviews**, **Core Group** meetings, planning meetings, **Child Protection Conferences** and any other meetings required alongside the parent. However, the carers' ability to attend should be discussed in meetings and reviews as they may have responsibility for other children and to their own family.

Foster carers will receive full information prior to placement from the child's social worker in relation to both the parent and the child. If the information has not been received the carer must inform the fostering social worker 2 days before the placement commences. If a placement is made on an emergency basis, the foster carer should expect to receive relevant information within 5 working days, maximum, but it should be sooner.

Parent's circumstances and history are strictly confidential to the named foster carers and not their families or friends. Parents must feel reassured that no discussions will take place between family members and friends.

Foster carers offering parent and child arrangements may do so alongside existing arrangements. When carers are holding a vacancy, a new arrangement can be considered in consultation with all those involved in the existing parent and child arrangement but careful matching is paramount.

It is not appropriate for a foster carer to take fostering leave during a parent and child placement, and no respite will be granted without prior discussion, unless this is because of an emergency or has been pre-arranged.

9: ROLE OF THE PARENT

The parent will be expected to care for their child at all times (getting up, bathing, feeding, changing) under supervision from carer until it is agreed the supervision is no longer necessary.

The parent will be expected to manage the day and bedtime routines, which fits in with the foster carer's household. When the parent is settling a child for bed it is their responsibility to check on the child throughout the evening and during the night as required.

By the end of the assessment period the parent will be expected to demonstrate competence in meeting their child's physical needs as well as interacting positively with their child.

By the end of the assessment period the parent will be expected to be able to shop, budget and cook for themselves and their child and attend to their and their child's laundry.

It is the parent's responsibility to maintain any existing accommodation whilst in the foster care arrangement. They may need to access advice and support and have evidence to ensure they are receiving their full benefit entitlement, including Housing Benefit.

The Parent will keep their room tidy and leave the kitchen, bathroom, and any other communal areas in a tidy, clean condition after use.

Parents will contribute to the wellbeing of everyone in the foster carers' home and in public by demonstrating non-aggressive, non-threatening behaviours.

The foster carer is required to make random room checks to ensure the safety of the child; therefore, the parent must always allow the foster carer access to their bedroom.

The parent should read the foster carers' records and if there are any differences of opinion on childcare these should be discussed and recorded. However, the parent will need to accept the final decision from the foster carer who will endeavour to contact the health visitor or social worker at the first opportunity.

Smoking or use of any illegal substances is not permitted inside the foster carer's home. If a parent smokes it must be in the designated outside area. It is recognised some parents may be supported in a parent and child placement whilst the parent is supervised by a treatment programme for drug or alcohol misuse. This should be discussed at the pre-placement meeting and recorded in the **placement planning meeting**.

10: ROLE OF THE SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER (SSW):

All Parent and Baby foster carers must be fully supported by a designated and experienced SSW who will offer a visit within the first week of placement and a minimum of 6 weekly support and supervision home visits ongoing. In addition, they will provide weekly phone contact. The SSW will also undertake unannounced visits.

The SSW should ensure full parent and child information is passed on to foster carer by the Child's Social Worker prior to placement commencing.

The SSW will read and sign off all daily records and should report any issues that are appropriate. These records will also be shared with the child's social worker.

The SSW will update their line manager and the child's social worker on the progress of the placement. If there are concerns about the placement, that may lead to a breakdown of relationships, the SSW will co-ordinate a **Signs of Stability Meeting**.

The SSW will check with foster carers that they have peer support through the parent and child support group or a peer mentor. This also involves any therapeutic support directly for the carer or psychological counselling.

Parent and Child foster carers will have this type of care provision included in their fostering terms of approval. Arrangements of this type should not routinely be made with carers who are not approved to provide this specialist foster care. If, in an emergency, a parent and child are placed outside a foster carer's terms of approval, a temporary variation must be completed immediately by the SSW and authorised by the Service Manager for Fostering. A Panel Review to change the terms of approval formally must be undertaken as soon as possible.

11: ROLE OF THE ALLOCATED CHILD CARE SOCIAL WORKER (ASW):

The child's social worker (ASW) should visit the arrangement regularly and make weekly phone/email contact with the carer. During these visits the child's allocated social worker should discuss **individually** and **together** with parent and carer how the arrangement is going in relation to the agreement and provide the opportunity to share concerns/worries.

The ASW should check on any arranged appointments and childcare cover that needs to be approved by the carers and discussed with the SSW.

The child's allocated social worker must arrange regular reviews of the arrangement following the Placement Planning Meeting. The reviews should be arranged at least 6 weekly, and more frequently if necessary, and can be combined with a child in care review. Every review should consider the placement 'exit plan' and future plans for the family.

It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to keep the non-resident parent (usually the father) and the trusted network informed about the progress of the arrangement, including plans for family times and family network meetings. The child's social worker has to consider how much to involve the non-resident parent, and the nature of the parents' relationship especially the likely impact on the child.

Should a dispute arise within the arrangement, the SSW and ASW will initially undertake joint visits. If necessary, the ASW will then arrange a follow up meeting to include the parent, SSW and carer and the practice team manager.

If the arrangement is due to continue for 13 weeks or more, the ASW will discuss with the parent about their Housing Benefits (HB) status. This is because, if the parent is in receipt of HB, their entitlement will cease after 12 weeks. It is important that a discussion with the HB officer is undertaken.

The child's ASW must ensure that the foster carer has all relevant information at the latest by the date of the pre-placement planning meeting. If the arrangement is made in an emergency basis, placement information must be supplied within 5 days. The social worker will provide the SSW and the carer up-to-date information about any care proceedings and risk assessments and likely impact on the current arrangement.

If the parent is also a Child in Care or open to Leaving Care team, their social worker or young person adviser must provide copies of 'Suffolk's promise' and other child in care information including access to an advocate.

Where the parent is a child (under 18yrs), the allocated social worker for that parent should visit the placement every four weeks to meet with the parent and the foster carer. The parent's

allocated social worker will provide an opportunity for the parent to discuss any issues or worries and will assist the parent to address them.

In some circumstances, for example during PLO or care proceedings, it will be appropriate for the parent if they are under 18yrs to have a different social worker to ensure the child's social worker concentrates on ensuring that their needs are met. For young parents who are children in care or care leavers this will not be necessary as they would have their own social worker or young person adviser.

The **Placement Planning Meeting** is an essential meeting in preparing for a placement for the child in care, as well as their child. There should be a separate meeting for the parent and for the child, although this can happen consecutively.

Consideration must be given to the parent's contact with their family and friends, time out (with and without their baby), babysitting, household tasks and the level of practical support needed.

12. PLANNED PARENT AND CHILD PLACEMENT PROCESS

- **Pre-birth Social Work Assessment** takes place at 12 weeks gestation. Child Protection concerns identified; recommendation for Pre-birth assessment to commence.
- **Convene strategy discussion** – decision for Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) to be made.
- **Pre-birth assessment** to be completed over 6 weeks – recommendation is for Parent and baby foster placement to be identified.
- **ICPC** takes place at 21 weeks gestation – Outcome is Child Protection plan and PLO.
- **Legal Strategy Meeting** takes place – threshold met for proceedings and PLO meeting to take place.
- **Attend County Resource Panel** – and Parent and Child foster placement identified, by week 27 gestation.
- **PLO meeting** held and plan discussed with parents, by week 30 gestation.
- **Placement Planning Meeting** held. This should include, foster carer, SSW, ASW (CIN or CIC), CIC PM or CSW (ideally CIC SW should be identified and also attend the meeting), identified Health Visitor and Family Nurse Partnership, if involved. Parent and any support worker they may have. The meeting should also discuss the exit plan. This should take place by the latest week 34 gestation.
- Within this meeting the **purpose of the placement is discussed** and also **expectations and consequence agreement** signed up to. (see CoramBAAF for the placement plan document)

- **Foster carer and parent relationship begins** to be established through weekly telephone calls and possible visit to the foster home. This time could include the parent spending time with the foster carer who can start to teach practical skills such as how to use the home appliances and baby equipment such as bottle steriliser, how to bath a baby by using a doll etc.
- **Pre-discharge planning** meeting takes place.
- **Within the first week of the placement** a joint meeting takes place at the foster home to include ASW and SSW to ensure all is in place.
- **Initial CIC review** to take place within 28 days.
- **6 weeks review of arrangement and parenting capacity assessment (PCA).** Adjustments can be made to the plan in line with progress. If going well, start to put into action **Exit plan**. If not, continue arrangement and plan accordingly; consideration should be given to return the matter to Court to review the placement.
- **10 week review of arrangement and completion of PCA.** Recommendation of PCA is for parent and child to leave the placement and go to housing as identified in Exit plan, with a further 6 weeks of assessment in the community. If all remains positive Final evidence is submitted. If not positive, consideration should be given to return the matter to Court to review the placement.