

## SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION OF FOSTER CARERS

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**Agreed by:** CYPS Policies and Procedures Group

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**Document Author:** Suffolk Fostering Service

**Responsible Service Area:** Suffolk Fostering Service

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### PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

This policy is based on the [National Minimum Standards](#), Standard 21 – Supervision and support of foster carers, and other statutory guidance for Fostering Services.

It is written for Mainstream Foster Carers, Practitioners and Managers in the Fostering Service. This guidance details the Supervision and Support requirements of the Fostering Service and Foster Carers and how these will be met.

Suffolk Fostering Service strongly endorses a professional partnership between foster carers and staff. We understand that foster carers benefit from professional and supportive relationships with the service and we shall do all in our power to enable foster carers to accomplish the fostering task to the highest standards.

Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who will regularly visit the foster carer(s), including at least one unannounced visit a year.

*If requested, we will translate this policy, or particular 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              |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| V1.2 | Additions in relation to Staying Put arrangements/ change CSW to Team Manager as per Families First restructuring. | 16.09.26<br>LA/GD |
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## **1. Introduction**

National Minimum Standards for Fostering (Standard 21.8) state that supervision visit meetings should have *“a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer’s work, ensure that the foster carer is meeting the child needs, taking into account the child’s wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer’s performance and develop their competencies and skills”*.

Suffolk Fostering uses a [Signs of Safety \(SOS+\)](#) framework for supervision of foster carers to support meeting this standard, this is a solution focused and relationship-grounded approach and underpinned by our awareness of the benefits of trauma sensitive and restorative informed practice. This framework is embedded in the supervision record table, for example What are we worried about? What’s Working Well and What needs to happen and use of Scaling Question(s).

You will be allocated a named Supervising Social who is responsible for supervising and supporting foster carers, they will ensure that you have guidance, support, and training to maintain a quality service. Support will be given to foster carers to understand the fostering task and working within the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and Suffolk Fostering Services policies, procedures, and guidance.

## **2. Support and Supervision**

Effective and collaborative supervision is fundamental to safe and reflective practice, as foster carers this is a key part of development and learning from your experiences when caring for children placed with you. Supervision offers a space for you to explore day-to-day challenges and more complex dilemmas in the context of the fostering task. Your Supervising Social Worker will help you consider ways to support children in your care, for example considering a child’s behaviour through a trauma informed lens.

You will receive regular contact with your Supervising Social Worker, this will be via telephone, email, and face-to-face supervision visits. The frequency will vary according to need and circumstances. For example, an experienced carer with a child that is settled and matched long term may require less frequent visits than a foster carer providing a short-term arrangement to a child with high level, complex needs. The frequency of visits for short break foster carers will be proportionate to the number of short breaks provided.

If there are two carers in the fostering household wherever possible both should be available for supervision visits. However, it is recognised that this can be difficult if one partner is working. Therefore, Suffolk Fostering’s Policy is that the second carer should be present for at least four visits across the year e.g. once every 3 months as a minimum.

### **3. Supervision Agreement**

Your supervising social worker will complete a Supervision Agreement (Appendix A) with you when you are first approved as a Foster Carer with Suffolk Fostering Service. If you have a change of supervising social worker this will be updated to represent any changes. This agreement will include the venue for supervision, duration, and frequency of the visits. The Supervision Agreement will be dated and signed by the foster carer(s) and supervising social worker, a copy of the agreement will be published to the foster carer portal and where requested a copy sent via email. The Supervision Agreement will be reviewed regularly so that it represents any changes in these arrangements.

It is anticipated that supervision visits will be held at the fostering household, this ensures confidential and sensitive discussions take place in a private space. On occasions it may be considered appropriate and mutually beneficial to hold supervision in a different venue, for example a booked meeting room after a Child in Care review. This will be discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis.

### **4. Supervision Visits**

Supervision visit meetings are an opportunity to explore and reflect on your role as a foster carer, these collaborative discussions provide valuable support and guidance. Information shared within supervision will be treated in a professional manner and respectful of all parties' views.

We aim for supervision to be a dedicated space to support meaningful conversations and free from interruptions where possible. On occasions, for example staff sickness, supervision may need to be cancelled, we will endeavor to rearrange a mutually convenient time as soon as possible.

#### **The Purpose of Supervision is to:**

- Identify key tasks and agree action plans
- Review care plans and social worker visits of any children placed
- Capture meetings, for example CIC Reviews and PEPs
- Consider practical and emotional support needs for the fostering household
- Explore foster carer(s) relationships with children that are placed with them, to include relationships within the wider fostering household
- Provide a space to reflect on your experiences and feelings
- Reflect on foster carer recordings
- Discuss significant events and any next steps or support required
- Give and receive constructive feedback
- Explore referrals to additional support services, for example Suffolk's Therapeutic Fostering or Connect
- Monitor the family safer care plan and managing risk

- Note any changes to the fostering household and support network
- Discuss any changes to foster carer(s) health
- Explore foster carers offer and availability
- Planning short breaks and monitoring carers short break allowance
- Discuss any financial enquiries or concerns, for example fostering claims
- Equipment required to care for children can be considered, for example child car seats. Where equipment is required, and funding agreed, SCC will support the direct purchase of this
- Explore ways to achieve your training and development needs
- Ensure you are meeting the National Minimum Standards for fostering
- Monitoring standards of care
- Ensure foster carers are aware of updates to policies and procedures
- Discuss ideas for the development of Suffolk Fostering Service

A record of the supervision visit will be shared via the foster carer portal for agreement and any comments before being finalised and published to your foster carer portal. Emailed copies of supervision records can be facilitated if access to the foster carer portal is a challenge, please discuss with your SSW. Foster carers can request copies of historical supervision records if needed through their SSW. Suffolk Fostering Service keeps copies of all supervision notes on foster carer's electronic file, these remain the property of Suffolk Fostering Service.

Virtual visits via Microsoft Teams may be used in exceptional circumstances, for example someone in the fostering household having an infectious illness.

## **5. Frequency of Visits**

We recognise that foster carers will be at different stages of their career, offering a variety of different fostering arrangements. Some fostering households may benefit from more frequent visits, for example newly approved foster carers or those experiencing complexities and challenges, we aim to be flexible if an increase in visits is needed. The duration of a supervision visit typically lasts anywhere between 60-120 minutes dependent on the needs of the fostering household.

### **Suffolk Fostering Visit frequency:**

- **Short breaks** - foster carers who provide short breaks solely, visits will take place every **4-6 weeks**
- **Short term** – foster carers who are caring full-time, supervision will be every **4-6 weeks**
- **Long term/Permanence** - foster carers who only have children matched long term in their care, supervision is every **6-8 weeks**. Where they also offer short-term placement visits will be every **4-6 weeks**
- **Foster carers on hold** - a minimum of every **12 weeks**, this will be discussed within supervision and formally agreed between all parties. At least 1 unannounced visit per year will still be required

- **Staying Put Arrangements** - if there are other CIC in the fostering household supervision will continue to be in line with the carers' fostering offer. Where a foster carer remains registered an allocated Staying Put Supervising Social Worker will visit every **6-8 weeks**
- **LINK carers** - every **6-8 weeks**

The frequency of visits will be agreed within the Supervision Agreement, any changes required will be confirmed within ongoing supervision records to ensure supervision meets everyone's needs and the expectation of the service.

Management oversight will support supervising social workers with agreements of the frequency of visits; this will be on a case-by-case basis and within the time frames detailed above.

## **6. Support In between Supervision**

Foster carer(s) will have access to support from their supervising social worker in between supervision visits, this is via telephone or email. At times your named supervising social worker may not be available, they will ensure you have the contact details of their Team Manager (or alternative contact) who will be able to support you in their absence. Out-of-hours support can be accessed by calling 0800 9171 109, where a Fostering Out-of-Hours Advice and Support (FOOHAS) worker will be available alongside the Emergency Duty Service (EDS team).

## **7. Disagreements**

Areas of disagreement between the Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carer will be recorded in the Supervision Record. Where disagreements cannot be resolved these will be referred to the Supervising Social Worker's Line Manager.

[Suffolk County Council Complaints procedure.](#)

**Appendix A****SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL****FOSTERING SERVICE****Supervision Agreement**

This supervision agreement is to be used in conjunction with the Supervision and Support Policy and Guidance. Where there is a Staying Put Arrangement, this agreement is also to be used alongside Staying Put Guidance in relation to discussing and recording information involving the young adult.

**The following agreement concerns the supervision between**

*(Foster Carer)*

*(Foster Carer)*

*(Supervising Social Worker)*

**Supervision will take place:**

Venue:

Frequency:

Second Carer: Please note that the second foster carer will be expected to participate in supervision a minimum of four times a year

Duration:

Records: The SSW will record the discussion and provide you with a copy of the notes via the Carer's Portal. These can be commented on and finalised to confirm they are a true record of the supervision. These records will be published on your portal, please discuss with your SSW if you need support with the portal or the records shared in a different format.

**Topics covered in every supervision session will include:**

Any issues arising from the fostering task; for example, support needs of the Carer(s); record keeping; development needs of the Carer(s), including training and any additional topics as required. Alongside the practical discussions carers will be supported to reflect on their fostering experiences and learning from these.

Please note that all Supervising Social Workers will make at least one unannounced visit to the Foster Carers over the year.

**This agreement will be reviewed in supervision and the annual review process**

Signed: (Foster Carer) Date:

Signed: (Foster Carer) Date:

Signed: (Supervising Social Worker) Date: