**Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements**

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# **About This Document**

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| Title | Parent and Child Fostering Arrangements |
| Purpose | **To provide the fostering services guidance on the recruitment, assessment and management of foster carers willing to take on parent and child placements.** |
| Updated by | **Corrie Castleman** |
| Approved by | **Fostering Board** |
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# **Version Control**

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| Date Issued | Version | Summary of Changes | Created by |
| March 2016 | **3.0** | **Removal of information regarding the Benefit Plus service as this is no longer available** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| March 2016 | **3.1** | **Update of some terms** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| January 2022 | **4.0** | **Update of assessment report**  **Viability Checklist**  **Financial entitlement of FC**  **The role of a P&C foster care** | **Corrie Castleman** |

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# Introduction and Legal Framework

Essex County Council needs foster carers who can take on parent and child arrangements. This is often, but not always, to enable a parenting assessment to be undertaken, whilst ensuring the child is safeguarded. These can be complex situations as sometimes both the parent and child will be ‘looked after’, on other occasions only the parent is ‘looked after’ or only the child may be ‘looked after’. The Service must therefore be clear what each foster carer can offer and what the arrangements are for both the parent and the child. Such arrangements will impact on the fostering household whatever the legal status of those involved.

* 1. Fostering Statutory Guidance (2011) states that:

2.14 When arrangements are made by the local authority for a parent and child to live together with foster carers, for example to enable a parenting assessment to be undertaken, the responsible authority must take particular care to clarify the nature of the arrangement. If both the parent (under the age of 18) and child are looked after children, both will be foster placements, but it is also possible that looked after status will only apply to either the child or the parent. In whichever circumstance, it will be necessary to clarify the respective roles of the foster carer and the parent in relation to the child. If neither the parent nor the child is a looked after child the arrangements will not be covered by the 2011 Regulations, but the fostering service should be mindful of the additional responsibilities of the foster carer, any additional skills, training and support the carer may require, and any additional insurance considerations.

2.15 Regulation 26 makes it clear that a person who is living with a foster carer as part of a parent and child arrangement is a member of the foster carer’s household for the purposes of these Regulations.

* 1. Fostering Guidance 2011 Annex B is included as an appendix to this document.
  2. Standard 28 (40) NMS 11 states:

The fostering service advises foster carers of financial and other support that is available to foster carers where a child remains with them after they reach the age of 18 or where they care for/provide a home for a child and their parent(s).

# Essex Policy

* 1. Recruitment of foster carers who can take parent and child arrangements is one of the priorities within Essex Fostering Service. Foster carers with potential to provide parent and child placements are also encouraged to change their registration as part of their household review.
  2. Other than in exceptional circumstances foster carers taking a parent and child placement should not have other children placed with them. Exceptional circumstances may include that a young person in placement becomes pregnant and the foster carer is prepared to continue the placement after the baby is born and the foster carer already has a long-term commitment to another child or young person who is already placed.
  3. If a foster carer does have another child or young person in placement a full risk assessment must be completed to consider any potential risks with all the children and young people in the household.
  4. If the parent of the child is over 18 years of age a DBS check will be required as they are included as part of the fostering household.
  5. If a DBS check is required for the parent this should be applied for as soon as the placement is agreed. However, it is recognised that the arrangement may need to be made prior to this being processed. If this occurs, then the parent of the child must not be left alone with any other children or young people who are placed with the foster carers. A clear decision should be made regarding unsupervised contact between the parent and child, and this should be put in writing as part of the Placement Plan which should be completed prior to placement. If the Placement Plan is not completed prior to the arrangement, it is the responsibility of the child’s social worker to ensure that this is agreed with the foster carers.
  6. The Placement Planning Meeting must ensure that the foster carer understands their roles and responsibilities regarding both the parent and child. This includes any delegated authority and the purpose of the placement e.g., assessment. Ideally this should take place prior to the parent and child being placed to allow for any potential areas of conflict to be agreed and to ensure all parties understand their responsibilities.
  7. As with other placements the foster carer, with the support of their supervising social worker must update the Family Safe Care Plan to include the new arrangement and consider any additional implications for a parent and child placement.
  8. Smoking: The Essex Policy is that foster carers who smoke should not have children under 5 years of age placed with them. This remains the same for parent and child placements. However, if the parent of the child smokes there may need to be some flexibility around this providing that there are no other children in placement. The parent of the child should be discouraged from smoking and help given to support them with giving up. However, it may be agreed that the parent of the child can smoke but should not do so inside the foster home or in proximity of the child. This should be discussed and agreed as part of placement planning as it is a potential source of conflict. For example, if the parent goes outside to have a cigarette it may need to be negotiated how often this should occur and that the foster carer is available to look after the baby.

# The Role of a Parent and Child Foster Carer

* 1. To provide suitable physical environment to comfortably accommodate both parent and baby.
  2. To be fully available to provide full time support and supervision to the parent and baby (it will not be acceptable for the carer to work or have significant family commitments).
  3. To have a good knowledge of the development and safe care needs of a baby and an understanding of attachment.
  4. To have a good understanding of the potential needs of a new parent who may not have experienced good parenting, may have been a LAC and may be under 18, possibly delayed in their development or have learning disability.
  5. To have good communication skills and be confident in delivering advice, guidance, and training and in giving constructive feedback.
  6. To provide a supportive, nurturing, and caring family environment to both parent and baby.
  7. To maintain and work within clear boundaries regarding day-to-day arrangements for care of the baby and the expectations of both parent and carer.
  8. To enable the parent to independently take responsibility for the child’s day to day care, in line with the risk assessment and placement agreement.
  9. To supervise and monitor parent’s care of her child (initially at a high level and reducing depending upon risk assessment and progress made) to ensure the baby’s safety and wellbeing. This will be particularly important where there are existing child protection concerns.
  10. To report any child protection concerns immediately to the social worker.
  11. To monitor the parent’s physical and emotional wellbeing and provide support and guidance as needed.
  12. To provide practical guidance, advice, and support to the parent in caring for the baby to encourage appropriate development, safe parenting skills and to meet the child’s needs on a day-to-day basis.
  13. To provide advice, support, and training to the parent to enable them to consider the child’s ongoing development and future needs.
  14. To provide advice, support, and training to the parent to enable them to develop independence skills.
  15. To arrange sessions to address issues such as cooking, budgeting, shopping, developing a routine, etc.
  16. To provide transport as required to appointments and support in attending clinic/GP/hospital appointments; contact, assessment sessions/support group i.e., at family centre and community groups such as parent and baby sessions as needed/appropriate in line with risk assessment and placement agreement.
  17. To make daily, written factual observations regarding the parent’s care of the baby to include both positives and negatives (to ensure that good parenting and progress is recorded as well as any concerns that have been observed). This should include observations of parent’s interaction with the child and a comment about attachment and will be available to share with the parent and professionals.
  18. To provide weekly reports to the social worker/supervising social worker to inform any ongoing assessment. The child will have a social worker and if the parent is receiving support from the Leaving & After Care or Adult Service then the parent will also have their own social worker.
  19. The carer will receive an enhanced level of support from the fostering service and it is recommended that parent and baby carers will be allocated a specialist SSW who has undertaken relevant training.
  20. To attend regular meetings with social workers and other professionals to review the placement and care plan.
  21. To care for the baby in the absence of the parent in order to provide the parent with the opportunity to have some personal time, on a pre-agreed basis. This may be to meet friends socially, spend time with a partner or to attend a group/activity in the community, but will be agreed as part of the placement agreement.

# Assessment of Foster Carers

* 1. Foster carers who are willing and able to consider taking on parent and child arrangements will need to have some additional skills and training to manage these complex situations. They will need to have the skills required by foster carers who look after young babies as well the ability to communicate and work with young people/adults. See Appendix 2 for ‘The Role of a Parent and Child Foster Carer.’
  2. Areas to considered when discussing foster carers suitability by SSW or HHR officer and when assessing foster carers for parent and child arrangements (Appendix 3 Viability) include:
  3. Ability to accept “good enough” parenting - The foster carer will not be directly looking after the child as that is the parent’s role. However, the foster carer will be expected to observe, support, and facilitate the parent in providing this. Their role is to ensure that the parent is giving the child ‘good enough’ care and this may conflict with the carer’s views about good parenting or the parenting they would provide.
  4. Child Protection Awareness - Foster carers will still be expected to ensure that the children living with them are safe. This again may be a conflict if the parents are looking after the child. Foster carers will need to be able to make objective judgements about what is safe care and what isn’t. Carers will also need to be clear about when they should intervene and when they may need to contact other professionals for advice and guidance.
  5. Working with Birth Parents - Although all foster carers are expected to work with birth parents this becomes a crucial role when the parent is living with them full time. The carers will be expected to find an appropriate balance between keeping professional boundaries whilst being able to be warm and supportive.
  6. Record Keeping - Good record keeping is expected of all foster carers but it is likely to be more demanding for parent and child arrangements and should include records about the parent’s welfare and wellbeing as well as records on how the parent is caring for their child, including details of the basic care, stimulation, motional warmth, safety, stability / lifestyle. The foster carer’s records are likely to be used to inform assessment reports and could be used for care proceedings in court. Foster carers doing this work therefore need to be clear about the expectations of record keeping.
  7. Practical Considerations - The home will need to be large enough for the task. For example, the carer and the parent may need to use the kitchen at the same time. There may also need to be a balance between giving the parent and child some private space and observing the interaction. It will need to be very clear as to what is expected regarding supervision and observation and whether the foster carer needs to be in the home all the time or whether the foster carer can leave the parent and child on their own.
  8. See ECC Viability checklist (*Appendix 2*) and Parent and Child Assessment report (*Appendix 3*).

# Arrangements for a parent and child with foster carers

* 1. Referral and Funding - Referrals for parent and child placements will be made via the child’s social worker to the Children and Young People Placement Service (CYPPS) team. CYPPS may contact available parent and child carers directly, but all placements should be made in consultation with the carers allocated SSW or their fostering team.

* 1. Legal Status and Funding - Before any parent and child arrangement is made with a foster carer, the legal status of both the parent and the child must be clear to all parties. Whatever the legal status or age of the parent and child, foster cares will receive a fee of £500 for the parent and child together. If both parent and child are under 18, irrespective of whether they are ‘looked after’ or not, the foster carer will receive the appropriate age-related allowance for both parent and child. If the parent is over 18, they will be entitled to benefits and therefore the allowance paid to the foster carer will consider the contribution the parent should make to the carer from their benefit entitlement. This will be calculated in the same way that ‘staying put’ arrangements are.

# Matching

* 1. There are several factors that will need to be taken into consideration regarding matching the arrangement with the foster carer.
  2. It is expected that foster carers taking parent and child placements will not have other young people in placements other than in exceptional circumstances. Should this happen careful consideration and a risk assessment / matching will need to be completed prior to agreement of the placement to consider the likely impact of the arrangement for each child in the household. This must take into account the age and understanding of the child and how they are likely to cope with a baby in the household and the parent (whether they are a young person or an adult). It also needs to include Safeguarding issues and what the risk factors are for the child already in placement and whether there is, for example, a risk of that child being re-traumatised if they witness another child being poorly parented. It is worth noting that there has been a serious case review where a parent of one child in placement poisoned the baby of another young person in placement by contaminating the baby’s food.
  3. All relevant information should be provided to the prospective foster carer. For example, if the parent or child been looked after previously their review reports and other information should be made available If a pre-birth assessment has been completed this should also be provided
  4. The usual referral and matching forms used by the placement finding worker should continue to be used. In addition to these, other considerations should include any known history of the parent.

# Pre-Placement

* 1. The family safe care policy must be updated by the foster carer with the support of the Supervising Social Worker.
  2. The Placement Planning Meeting must be undertaken and should include the social worker of both the parent and child, the parent, the foster carers, and the supervising social worker. It should cover the following in addition to the usual expectations:
* This must clarify clear roles for the foster carer and the parent regarding responsibilities.
* If the expectation of the placement is that an assessment is completed it should be clear as to the purpose of this and how it is going to be undertaken.
* Expectations regarding supervision of the parent and child.
* Delegated responsibility given to foster carers.
* Expectations regarding record keeping for both the parent and the child.
* Agreement about when the foster carer will be expected to intervene to safeguard the child.
* Childcare and babysitting arrangements.
* House Rules (there may be some additional ones that need to be considered for a parent and child arrangement that are not usually required e.g., use of the kitchen, bathroom etc).
* Smoking arrangements if applicable.
* Contact and visitors e.g., parent’s partner.
* Finance and equipment – who is responsible for purchasing items required for the child and possibly the parent, this will be influenced by the legal status of the parent and child.
* This information should all be clearly recorded so that both the foster carer and the parent are able to access it at any time should any clarification be required.
* Are any risk assessments required and if so, have they been completed and shared with all relevant parties? If there are any risk assessments outstanding who is responsible for doing this, time scales for completion and how the information will be share when complete.
  1. The parent of the child should be made aware of the complaint’s procedures should they wish to address any matters they are unhappy with.

# Appendix 1 – Fostering Services Guidance and Regulations (2011) Annex B: Parent and child arrangements

**Introduction**

1 A local authority sometimes wishes to commission an assessment of a parent’s ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of his or her child, to inform its decision making about the provision of support services or intervention through care proceedings. Sometimes the court will request such an assessment within the framework of care proceedings. Most commonly these are arrangements for parents and their babies.

2 Residential assessments may take place in residential family centres. A residential family centre is regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002. They are required to register with Ofsted and are subject to inspection by Ofsted, and to meet the National Minimum Standards for Residential Family Centres published by the Department of Health.

3 Residential family centres are defined as establishments where accommodation is provided for a child and their parents, the parents' capacity to respond to the child's needs and safeguard their welfare is monitored and assessed, and parents are given such advice, guidance or counselling as is considered necessary.

4 An increasingly common alternative to assessment in a residential family centre is the arrangement whereby children and their parents live with foster carers for the purposes of assessment. A foster carer’s household is not an establishment, and so cannot be regarded as a residential family centre.

5 The sections below set out the different scenarios whereby arrangements may be made for a parent (or parents) and their child (or children) to live with foster carers for the purposes of an assessment. A foster carer is a person who has undergone checks and an assessment and has been approved as a foster parent by a local authority or an independent fostering provider.

**A voluntary arrangement by the local authority where the child is not looked after**

6 Where a local authority wishes to assess a parent's parenting capacity in the context of support provided to the child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or pre care proceedings, this would need to be with the agreement of the parent. The local authority may decide to make an arrangement with the family to live with a local authority foster carer to make the assessment, rather than to make use of a residential family centre.

7 Since in this case the child is not looked after by the local authority, none of the provisions of the Children Act 1989 relating to looked after children will apply, and the foster carer will not be acting in their capacity as a foster carer under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. In such a case the local authority will need to be satisfied that the arrangement is appropriate, in the sense that the foster carers have the necessary skills to participate in the assessment, and will not place at risk the welfare of any foster child who is placed in the household.

**A voluntary placement by the local authority where the child is looked after**

8 In a situation where the child is looked after and the parents are 18 or older, the provisions relating to looked after children will apply in relation to the child only. The child will be placed with the foster carer under section 22 of the Children Act 1989, and the responsible authority will be under a duty to make the most appropriate placement available for both the parent and child. In making the placement it will therefore need to consider the skills and capacity of the foster carer, notwithstanding that the assessment of the parent’s ability is not covered by the 2011 Regulations.

9 Although the child will be fostered by the foster carer, the child’s parent or parents will also be living with the child in the foster carer's household. As the parent will not be a looked after child, the provisions in respect of looked after children will not apply to them, regardless of whether the parent is under 18 or is older or has previously been a looked after child.

10 In these circumstances the parent will still hold parental responsibility in respect of their child and be living in the same household as the child’s foster carer. It will therefore be vital that respective roles and arrangements for delegated authority are clarified when the arrangements are being made. These must be set out in the placement plan. The foster carer’s task in relation to undertaking an assessment of the parent’s capabilities will not be governed by the 2011 Regulations but will be closely aligned with their responsibilities towards the looked after child.

11 The fostering service and the responsible authority will need to satisfy themselves that the proposed arrangements will not impact unduly on the foster carer’s responsibilities towards other children. Any necessary support should be provided to enable the arrangements to succeed. As with any placement when another child is already placed with the foster carer, the responsible authority for that child would need to agree to the new arrangements.

12 For the purposes of the 2011 Regulations, a parent living with a foster carer in the above circumstances is a member of the foster carer’s household. The fostering service’s safeguarding policy must include a statement of measures to be taken to safeguard children placed with foster carers before any arrangements are made for a parent and child to join the household. The 2011 Regulations allow for DBS checks to be obtained but there is no requirement for these to be undertaken as a prerequisite to the individual joining the household (regulation 26 and 28(3).

**A voluntary placement by the local authority where both the child and parent are looked after**

13 Where both the child and the parent are looked after the provisions relating to looked after children will apply to both. The duties in relation to section 22 of the 1989 Act, as outlined in paragraph 8, will apply in respect of the placements of both the child and the parent.

**An arrangement directed by the courts where the child is looked after**

14 Where care proceedings are in progress, the court may require an assessment of the child and their parents.

15 If the child is subject to an interim care order under section 38(6) and the court directs a parenting assessment but leaves it up to the local authority how that assessment is organised, the local authority may decide that the parent and child will live with a foster carer for the purpose. This will be a placement of a looked after child by the local authority and so the placement will be governed by the 2011 Regulations.

16 Even if the court directs that an assessment be made by a foster carer, the placement will still be a local authority placement and the 2011 Regulations will apply.

**Placement with Parents**

17 Children, who are in care, may also be placed with their parents (or someone else who has parental responsibility for them) under regulations 15 - 20 of the 2010 Regulations. While such children are looked after children and fall within the 2010 Regulations, they do not fall within the 2011 Regulations as they are not fostered children. This includes where a child is placed with their parents and the parents and that child then live with foster carers.

**The usual fostering limit**

18 The usual fostering limit applies to the placement of looked after children, and so a parent who is living in a parent and child arrangement with a foster carer does not count towards that limit unless he or she is themselves a looked after child. However, the impact of the parent being within the household must be taken into account in considering the placement of any looked after children.

# Appendix 2 - SSW Viability Checklist to use when discussing P&C placements with your carers: Guide discussion to enable FC and SW if they should be assessed

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Tick |
| Have the applicants got the time and space for this kind of fostering? |  |
| What is the applicant’s understanding of what this kind of placement involves? |  |
| What do they feel will be the rewards for them? |  |
| What is their understanding of what constitutes “good enough” parenting? |  |
| How would they decide when to get involved with the care of the baby and when to step back? |  |
| Could the applicants provide an appropriate level of supervision to ensure the safety of the baby is paramount at all times? |  |
| Has the applicant the ability to make a detailed assessment of the quality of care offered by the parent? |  |
| Has the applicant the ability to write sound, evidence-based reports? |  |
| Are they prepared for the possibility that they may have to give evidence in court? |  |
| How able would the applicant be to work with a wide range of other professionals? |  |
| Does the applicant understand the implications of having potentially, another adult living in the home? |  |
| Do they understand the implications for this kind of placement on the individual members of the family? |  |

# Appendix 3 - Parent and Child Fostering Assessment report

|  |
| --- |
| Name of Applicant(s) |
| What is the applicant(s) motivation to do parent and child fostering? What do they feel will be the rewards for them? |
|  |
| What is the applicant(s) understanding of what this kind of placement involves, and how will this impact on all family members? |
|  |
| Is the accommodation suitable for parent and child fostering, and how will the applicant(s) manage another adult living in their home? |
|  |
| What is the applicant/s knowledge and experience of caring for babies, and is that knowledge up to date? |
|  |
| What is the applicant/s knowledge regarding the physical and emotional needs of pregnant and postnatal women and is that knowledge up to date? |
|  |
| Could the applicant(s) be available to provide an appropriate level of supervision to ensure the safety of the child at all times? |
|  |
| Could the applicant(s) accept “good enough” parenting, and will they be comfortable allowing the parent to be the primary carer? |
|  |
| Do the applicant(s) have good child protection awareness, including up to date training, and the confidence to intervene where necessary? |
|  |
| Could the applicant(s) work closely and sensitively with birth parents in this context, including providing support and sharing any concerns? |
|  |
| Do the applicant(s) have the ability to provide objective, evidence-based written records, and give evidence in court about these if necessary? |
|  |
| What specific parent and child training or preparation has been provided for the applicant(s)? |
|  |
| Summary |
|  |
| Name of Social Worker |
| Signature of Social Worker  Date |