

Barnsley Foster Carers Handbook



#BarnsleyCares



Fostering
in Barnsley



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Documents

1. Timelines for assessment and approval
2. Foster Carer Agreement
3. Payment Scheme
4. Progression
5. Miscellaneous Finance – including claiming DLA
6. General Guidance for Foster Carers regarding expectations of care
7. Delegated Authority
8. Supervision Policy (including supervision agreement)
9. Training – description of current offer and practice with link to annual training programme
10. Change of Circumstances – including assessment of new partners/review decisions/exemptions/out of approval etc.
11. Allegations
12. Service Expectations of Foster Carers

Useful Links

[POD](#)

[Tri-X – Barnsley's Procedures](#)

[Research in Practice](#)

[The Fostering Network](#)

Timelines for Foster Carer Agreement

Pre-application	Activity	Time-Scale	Additional Information	Rolling Working Days Total	Barnsley Targets
Enquiry (TC or Info evening)	1. Send information pack	Same Day		1	
	2. Home visit booked	Within 5 Working Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This activity is dependent on the applicant being available. 	5	
	3. Home visit	Within 10 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This activity is dependent on the applicant being available. 	15	20
Application, Stage 1	4. Application received	Within 5 working days of home visit Statutory checks commenced on the day of receipt application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This activity is dependent on the applicant. Follow up call Within 10 days of home visit Every 10 days subsequent. This activity is dependent on statutory agencies. Medical arranged. 	5	10 (additional 5 days for application returns)
	5. All checks returned	Within 30 days (6 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chased by FSW on daily basis post 30 days. 	35	45 (additional 5 days for check returns)
Assessment Stage 2	6. Allocated to social worker for assessment	Within 5 working days of receipt of all completed checks.		40	50
	7. Allocated a place on the next available training programme	Within 5 working days of receipt of all completed checks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training to take place before the end of the assessment. 	40	
	8. Assessment	Completed within 40 days (8 weeks) from allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependant on applicant availability 	80	110 (60 working days for assessment and training)
Presentation to	9. Completed report to Team Manager for QA	5 working days		85	120
	10. Completed report to applicants	5 working days		90	125
	11. Completed report to Panel Members	10 working days		100	135
	12. Approved at Panel	10 working days		110	165 (10 days delay getting to Panel)
Total Time				125	190

Foster Carer Agreement

Foster Care Agreement Between Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE SERVICE AND BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH
COUNCIL APPROVED FOSTER CARER - DECEMBER 2020

1. The Foster Carer Handbook will be available electronically on the BMBC Fostering web-site.
2. Foster carers will be regarded as members of the child care team for children placed with them. Carers will be invited to attend reviews, case conferences, planning meetings and Court, where this is required, regarding children in their care. Foster Carers will be expected to maintain the standards and values appropriate to the degree of trust placed in them in this role.
3. Foster carers will be provided with written information about their child. Written information will be provided prior to or at the time of placement. This information will be kept up to date and any details affecting placements for children will be shared as soon as possible with carers.
4. A Placement Plan will be drawn up by the Local Authority in consultation with the carers, child and birth parents. This should include details of the planned length of the placement, the purpose of the placement, arrangements for contact and permissions regarding health care. In emergency or where a placement is unplanned basic written information will be supplied with the necessary signatures in place at the time of placement. This will be followed as soon as possible and within 5 working days by the full information.
5. A social worker will be allocated to every child placed with carers and any changes in social worker will be notified to the carers at the earliest opportunity. The carers will be given explicit written information on whom to call in an emergency or when the social worker is unavailable for more than 2 weeks. This will usually be the duty social worker in the relevant team.
6. Any child will be visited and seen in the foster home by a social worker within one week of placement and then at least 6 weekly during the first year of placement. Thereafter visits will be at no less than 12 weekly if this is ratified at a Looked After Children's statutory review. (At the present time BMBC undertakes to visit every child 6 weekly regardless of the length of placement) At other times the child should be visited whenever a reasonable request is made either by the child or carer, or as deemed appropriate by the Child's Social Worker.
7. Children and young people must be reviewed within 20 working days of their admission into care. A further review will take place within 3 months and thereafter at intervals of not more than 6 months in line with the statutory minimum requirement. Reviews can extend to annually for long-term placements but at the present time BMBC is committed to reviewing all placements at least 6 monthly. If the child moves placement the timescales will revert to the initial 20 days and so on. At the discretion of Independent Reviewing Officer a review can be brought forward. Reviews should take place prior to any major decisions in a child's life.
8. All foster carers will have a supervising social worker who will visit regularly and at least once per month.
9. The Authority will provide all carers with a suitable Training Programme to enhance and develop their skills as foster carers and their understanding of the fostering task.

Foster Carer Agreement

10. Foster carers are provided with insurance cover by the Local Authority in respect of any claims against them resulting from their role as foster carers. However property is not covered and foster carers should ensure that their household insurance covers any damage which might result from their role as foster carers.
11. Foster carers have access to an independent complaints and appeals procedure, the Independent Review Mechanism, details of which are available via the Fostering Network or their individual support worker. Foster carers also have access to the BMBC complaints procedure but as members of the Team Around the Child they would be expected to try to resolve any issues with the Fostering Service or any other section of the Council at the earliest opportunity through their Support Worker. If the complaint is about their Support Worker then the foster carer can approach their line manager directly.
12. All foster carers will be provided with membership of an external fostering support organisation for their information and support – at the present time this is the Fostering Network
13. The progress and development of all foster carers will be reviewed every 12 months. The review will take place at the Council Offices and will be managed by an Independent Chair. Carers will be invited to the review and are expected to attend. The review will address the last year's performance; identify any changes in approval status and numbers, any changes in information in household composition and circumstances. The review will consider carers' strengths, weaknesses, training needs, ability to work with professionals and consider the appropriate level of remuneration in respect of the payment for skills scheme.
14. At the end of the first year in fostering the review record will be considered by the Fostering Panel. Any reviews which indicate concerns about foster carers, particularly regarding their continued suitability to foster, will also be referred the Fostering Panel. Any decisions made by the Panel can be challenged by the foster carer through the Independent Review Mechanism.
15. Information held by the Authority in relation to carers is available to them at any time by request and will be managed by the Council under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
16. The Authority provides an emergency out of hours service which foster carers can access. You should contact the Emergency Duty Team.
17. The Authority will ensure that all payments regarding placements are timely and accurate. In the event of an overpayment being made the Authority will recoup any over payment. This will be clarified in a letter to the carers and recorded on their file. Repayment will be expected and the Local Authority has the right to take legal action if necessary. If a carer has any queries about their payments they should contact their support worker or the duty worker if they are not available as soon as possible.
18. The child's social worker will ensure that every child and young person placed has a Health Assessment completed within 10 working days of the child coming into care. A Health Assessment must have taken place and the outcomes available for consideration at the first LAC Review after 20 days in placement. The implications of any illness or developmental issues will be fully explained to the carers before placement is made, if these are known, or as soon as these are known if they become apparent at a later stage.
19. Where a child is not able to attend school for any reason, plans will be put in place for a structured educational activity for the child until such time as they can return to full-time education. Advice and support will be provided to foster carers by their support workers in relation to the legal requirements and responsibilities of the education service. All looked after children's education is supported by the Virtual School Head who can be contacted through the Supporting Social Worker.

Foster Carer Agreement

- 20. Any allegation made against a foster carer will be investigated in accordance with the Authority’s written procedures and in a manner that is sensitive both to the need to protect and safeguard the welfare of the child or young person and the needs of the carers for support and information.
- 21. The impact of fostering on birth children of foster carers may be significant and support will be offered to these children by the Support Worker and the Children’s Social Worker and their views and opinions will be sought and listened to.
- 22. Should a foster carer feel the need to end a child’s placement in an unplanned way they are required to give the Authority at least 10 working days’ written notice in order to give sufficient time to find another suitable placement.

Signed

Date

Supervising Social Worker Fostering on behalf of the Local Authority

Signed

Date

Fostering Team Manager

Foster Carer Agreement

I / We the Foster Carer/s agree:

1. I/we will treat any child placed with me/us as an equal and valued individual in their own right and promote their welfare at all times having especial regard to any specific arrangements agreed with the Authority in respect of the child's race, ethnicity, gender or disability .
2. I/ we will care for any child placed with me/us as a member of my/our own family and promote her/his welfare having regard to the long and short term plans for the child.
3. I/we are member(s) of the child care team and I/we will attend reviews, case conferences, planning meetings and any other such meetings that are pertinent and concerning children in my/our care and give my/our views clearly. If unable to attend I/we will provide a report for the meeting. I/we will give evidence in court and meet with other professionals if the needs of the child/young person require this.
4. I/we will ensure we receive a copy of the Placement Plan drawn up between the Authority, myself/ourselves and, where appropriate, the child and her/his parents and work with all parties in respect of the plan.
5. I/we will inform our supervisory social worker immediately of the following:
 - Any intended change of address
 - Any change in the composition of my/our household
 - Any other change in my/our personal circumstances and any other event affecting either my/our capacity to care for any child placed or the suitability of my/our household
 - Any request or application to adopt children or obtain a Residence or Special Guardianship order for a child or for registration for childminding or day care
 - Any plans for holidays
 - Any plans for overnight stays for children away from the foster home in accordance with Delegated Authority requirements.
 - Any occasions where a child/young person has had an unplanned overnight stay in accordance with Delegated Authority requirements
6. In relation to children or young people placed, I / we agree that we will report any of the following immediately to the supervisory social worker (or the duty service if they are not available) in order that the service is able to comply with legal requirements to monitor such incidents and take any action as necessary. (Please note that this is separate from the need to inform the child's social worker, or, out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team, as will apply to a number of the events listed here):
 - Any incident of absconding by a child or young person *
 - Any serious accident or injury of a child or young person *
 - Illness of a child or young person
 - Medication, medical treatment or first aid.
 - Any allegation that a child or young person has committed a serious offence*
 - Any bullying incident or concern about risk of bullying
 - Any control and restraint incident

Foster Carer Agreement

- Any incident relating to child or young person leading to police being called to foster home.*
- Any involvement or suspected involvement of a child or young person in any form of sexual exploitation
- Any outbreak of infectious disease in the foster home sufficiently serious to be notified

Incidents with a * should be notified immediately to the child's social worker, or, out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team, as well as to the Supervisory Social Worker or Fostering Duty Worker at the earliest opportunity

7. I/we have received details of the Authority's complaints procedure, which will be used in line with (11) above only when informal resolution processes have been exhausted.
8. I/we will attend a minimum of 4 training courses arranged by the Authority to develop my/our fostering skills in accordance with the progression scheme and any other courses the Authority and I/we mutually agree would be useful to us and our care of foster children.
9. I/we understand and accept the Authority's advice on household contents insurance cover.
 - I/we will notify our insurance company of our approval as foster carers.
 - I/we will notify the Authority as soon as I/we have notice of any potential financial claim which could be covered by the Authority's indemnity/insurance policy.
 - I/we will make no offer to settle any claim by a third party without first consulting the Authority who under the terms of this indemnity can call for independent legal advice on the matter, provided by a solicitor nominated by me/us whose reasonable costs (subject to my/our eligibility for legal aid) will be met in full by the Authority.
10. I/we will ensure that children in our care are registered with a General Practitioner and that each child receives appropriate health care which may include contact with General Practitioners, dentists, opticians and other health specialists.
11. I/we ensure that a Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire is completed and returned annually in respect of all children in our care
12. I/we will ensure that all children placed with me/us are supported to practice their religion, if they and their parents wish, and will advise the Authority of any difficulties in achieving this.
13. I/we will encourage and enable a child/young person to understand their cultural background and family history. That I/we will use training and advice offered by the Authority to enable this to be done and will advise the Authority of any difficulties involved.
14. I/we will promote contact between a child/young person and her/his family unless stipulated otherwise in the Placement Plan and where re-imbursement has been agreed will submit any expenses within one month from their being incurred. I/we will maintain a record as required in relation to the child's contact visits.
15. 15. I/we will be positively committed to the best interests of a child/young person in my/our care and be an advocate for the child at all times. I/we are committed to enabling the agreed aims of a placement to be achieved and completed.
16. 16. I/we will be responsible on a day to day basis for encouraging the child/young person to attend school or work and will maintain contact regarding progress with school and attend parent's evenings and any other school events requiring the presence of a parent unless agreed otherwise with the Child's Social Worker.
17. 17. I/we will allow social workers to have access to the children in my/our care at all reasonable times. I/we will allow any authorised person to visit our home to see the child by arrangement and that I/we will allow the child to be seen alone by the social worker.

Foster Carer Agreement

18. I/we understand and accept that our supervising social worker is required to make unannounced visits to our home from time to time and at least once annually.
19. I/we will agree to co-operate as reasonably required with the Ofsted Inspection and in particular to allow the Ofsted Inspector to interview me/us and visit my/our home at any reasonable time.
20. I/we will allow the social worker and our supervisory social worker to see the child's bedroom to ensure that sleeping arrangements are satisfactory. I/we understand that the role of the supervising social worker is to have access to the child's bedroom on their supervisory visits and record that it has been seen.
21. I/we will maintain a record of any accident, illness or significant event affecting the child in my/our care, and that I/we will also keep a record of any medication given to the child in line with the medication procedure. Records pertaining to the child will be kept securely at all times and when the child leaves the placement these will be handed over to the Supervising Social Worker
22. I/we will communicate fully and honestly with the child's social worker at all times and keep them informed of the child's progress and notify the child's social worker immediately of any significant event affecting the child. I/we will try to avoid any situation reaching crisis point without warning by discussing matters with the child's social worker.
23. I/we must allow the Authority to remove the child if they decide to do so.
24. I/we agree to keep a record of the child's life while placed with me/us. I/we recognise the importance of photographs and other mementos for children leaving our care. These will be passed on to the child when they leave our care.
25. I/we are aware of the Authority's policy and guidance on dogs in foster homes and will advise our supervisory social worker if we are considering obtaining a dog. I/we understand that a dog questionnaire needs to be completed and recorded on my foster carer file.
26. I/we agree to comply with the policies and procedures of the Authority with regard to the protection of children placed with foster carers from abuse and neglect and the procedures for investigating allegations of this nature.
27. I/we agree to comply with the policies and procedures of the Authority with regard to the control, restraint and disciplining of children placed with me/us, and I/we agree in particular not to:
 - Use corporal punishment on any child placed with me/us
 - Use any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable
 - Use physical restraint on a child unless it is necessary to prevent likely injury to the child or other persons or likely serious damage to property.
28. I/we agree to comply with the policies and procedures of the Authority with regard to children absent from the foster home without permission. (See the South Yorkshire Joint Protocol on Missing Children)
29. I/we will have due regard to safety in the home and garden.
I/we will ensure that at least one smoke alarm is installed in our home.
The Fostering Service will arrange for a fire check to be completed by the Fire Service and appropriate alarms to be fitted into the home following their advice and guidance.
30. I/we agree that children in our care will be transported safely, and appropriate child car seats and restraints will be used to protect children travelling by car.
31. I/we agree that we will maintain equipment provided for children in reasonable condition and inform the Fostering Team when equipment is no longer in a serviceable condition.

Foster Carer Agreement

32. I/we understand that our approval as foster carers will be reviewed at least annually. This review will involve updating health and safety checks and our safe caring family guidelines.
33. I/we will ensure that any information relating to a child placed with me/us, to the child's family, or to any other person, which has been given to me/us in confidence in connection with a placement is kept confidential and is not disclosed to any person without the consent of the Authority. I/we will ensure that records relating to the child and the child's placement will be stored securely and handed over to the Supporting Social Worker once the child leaves our care.
34. I/we will agree for Disclosure and Barring Services checks to be completed and updated on myself/ourselves every three years in accordance with the regulations. I/we understand that under the new guidance for DBS checks that I am responsible to inform the Authority of any issues raised on the checks completed are to be shared with the Authority and recorded accurately on my file. I/we understand that such checks will be required on all members of the household aged 16 years and over.
35. I/we agree that we will only use babysitters for children in my/our care on a regular basis that we would consider safe and secure to look after a child. Delegated Authority will be considered by the Child's Social Worker to accommodate the regular use of a specific person. A Disclosure and Barring Service check may be required and should be completed by the Authority.
36. I/we will ensure that as soon as we are aware that there are any discrepancies with our weekly allowances ie under/over payments we will notify my Supervising social worker and in absence the duty fostering social worker in the Fostering Team. I/we understand that where overpayments have been made, re-payment will be required immediately and that the Authority may in some circumstances pursue legal action to recover over-payments.
37. I/we will notify the Authority immediately if we become aware that a conflict of interest may arise or has arisen in respect of our fostering role.
38. I/we will give at least 10 working days' notice to end a placement that I/we do not feel I/we are able to continue to manage. Preferably the ending of a placement will be planned and with the agreement of all parties. It is important to understand that the needs of the child/children in placement are paramount and where ever possible a planned move is required to ensure that the needs of the child/children can be best met. Where notice is given without prior planning and without the agreement of the team around the child the foster carer must ensure that the Children's Placement Team receive written notice at least 10 working days before the child is expected to leave.

Signatures:

Signed	Foster Carer
Name	Foster Carer
Signed	Foster Carer
Name	Foster Carer
Address	
Date	

Foster Carer Agreement

Foster Care Agreement

AGREEMENT BETWEEN BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL AND

Foster Carer/s

.....

This agreement constitutes a statement of responsibilities, requirements and expectations as jointly agreed in relation to all placements.

The above named carers are approved as foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 for the following:

The following limitations, restrictions or actions will apply until the next review of the foster carer:

A statement of the fostering allowances paid by the Authority to its carers is attached and will be reviewed annually. Any variations to these financial arrangements in respect of individual placements will be a matter for agreement between the parties to this contract.

Proposed changes to the Barnsley Foster Carer Payment Scheme – 2018

1. Purpose of the Report

The Report proposes changes to the Current Foster Carer Payment Scheme as a result of the ending of the Fostering Network Rate for allowances and learning from experience of the impact on recruitment and support following the introduction of the current scheme in April 2015

2. Recommendations

The recommendation is to accept the changes to the current Foster Carer payment scheme as detailed below:

- Increase the weekly payment at skills level 1 from £50 to £100
- Reduce the number of skills levels from 5 to 3
- Formalise the age-related skills payments and ensure that they both reflect the additional skills required to provide placements to older children and provide an incentive for carers to consider older children.
- Allowances will continue to be paid at the National Minimum Standards rates

3. Introduction

The current Foster Carer Payment scheme was introduced in April 2015 and has not been reviewed so far since that date. The payment scheme comprised 5 levels of skill-based fee payments and set allowances for the maintenance of the children based on the Fostering Network Rates which were set centrally and annually updated at the time.

Since the introduction of the Barnsley Scheme experience in practice has indicated that a review of the skills-level payments is required and the ending of the Fostering Network Allowance rate in April 2016 means that the arrangement for setting the maintenance allowances also requires a review.

At the time of the ending of the Fostering Network Rate and in order to conform with the requirement that allowances for both foster carers and other carers such as Special Guardians are comparable a temporary arrangement was put in place where the actual allowance was based on the National Minimum Standard rate proposed by the Department of Education and an 'age-related' skills based fee was introduced which exactly covered the difference between the NMS and the Fostering Network rate of allowances. This position however is untenable in the longer term.

The ending of the Fostering Network rate coupled with the 2 years' experience of delivering the new Barnsley payment scheme has provided an opportunity for review to ensure that the scheme reflects the skills and experience of carers and supports the Service to provide the numbers and types of placements required to meet the needs of local children and young people.

4. Proposal and Justification

4.1. Skills Levels

- Feedback from carers, as well as experience of trying to fit carers to an appropriate level at approval, indicates that the current level 1 is too low to encourage many new carers to take up fostering. The proposal is therefore to increase the payment at level 1 from £50 to £100.
- Feedback from carers and staff is that the current 5 level system is too complicated and doesn't meet the current need. The proposal is therefore to reduce the number of levels from 5 to 3.

Payment Scheme

- New carers will start at level 1 (£100 per week) and once they have passed their TSDS, can demonstrate that they are attending support groups, are supporting the Service through recruitment or other events, have completed the required 4 elements of training and can provide suitable placements for children they would progress to level 2 (£150 per week). It would be expected that most carers will spend 2 years at level 1.
- Once carers have completed the in-house Diploma and have at least 3 years' experience as a carer they could progress to level 3 (£360 per week).
- Carers who have a degree in Social Work/Teaching/Nursing and appropriate experience can start at level 3 provided they are providing placements for children over 5 or sibling groups.
- Connected persons carers would receive skills payments at level 1 once they had been approved as carers provided they had completed either the preparation for fostering training or the TSDS. Connected persons carers would not progress beyond skill level 1 without completing an additional assessment to become mainstream carers.
- Unless they were additionally assessed as main-stream carers and were caring for unrelated children connected persons carers would not receive age related skills fees. Age-related skills fees would only be paid for children not placed under the connected person regulations.

4.2. Age-related skills payments

- The Fostering Service has a significant gap in carers prepared to offer placements to older children. The increase in additional payments reflects the additional skills and experience required to care for older children and provides an incentive to encourage more carers to consider older children.
- The age-related skills fees are a rationalisation of the difference between the NMS rate for each age group and the previous Fostering Network rate. This additional payment needs to be maintained otherwise our carers will see significant reduction in their weekly payments. For many years Barnsley has made a commitment to carers to pay at the higher rate in recognition of the skills and commitment required to provide secure and stable placements for children placed with unrelated carers. Any significant reduction in overall payments would result in the loss of carers either to Independent Fostering Agencies or other Local Authorities as all Fostering Agencies are aware of the need to pay carers at competitive rates.
- The rationalisation of these payments enables the service to provide a clear rationale for higher skills payments to those carers providing placements for older children and young people where a higher level of skill, patience and understanding are often required.

Proposed Scheme					
Fortnightly	Age's				
	0-1	1-4	5-10	11-15	16-18
Level 1	£ 200.00	£ 200.00	£ 200.00	£ 200.00	£ 200.00
Level 2	£ 300.00	£ 300.00	£ 300.00	£ 300.00	£ 300.00
Level 3	£ 720.00	£ 720.00	£ 720.00	£ 720.00	£ 720.00
Allowances	£ 254.00	£ 260.00	£ 286.00	£ 326.00	£ 382.00
Age Related Fee	£ -	£ 20.00	£ 40.00	£ 90.00	£ 120.00

Payment Scheme

4.3. Allowances

Allowances will continue to be paid at the National Minimum Standards rates. These are up-lifted every year in line with current Government Policy. In the last few years this has been an up-lift of around 1%. This is likely to continue into the future and carers should see an annual increase in their fortnightly allowance.

Maintaining allowances in line with national guidelines provides complete transparency and enables the Service to ensure parity between approved foster carers and other types of carers supported by the Department.

5. Implications for Local People and Service Users

The new payment scheme will be far more transparent and more easily comprehensible to current and especially potential carers. The added incentive to care for older children should result in the increased availability of placements for children in the older age ranges.

The increase in the initial skills level will increase the interest amongst potential new carers as feedback from current and potential carers has been that the initial low level of reward has been a disincentive to many carers who may already be employed and would like to foster but are anxious about a reduction in income. The reduction from 5 to 3 levels also makes it much simpler for new carers to understand.

Additional in-house foster carers will broaden the choice for looked after children and enable the Service to support placements much more effectively than when children are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

There will be some carers who will see a reduction in income where they care for very young children due to the changes in the age-related fee. However this is considered to be a fair reflection of the skills required and the challenges posed by caring for older children. At current placement levels this will affect around 12 carers currently caring for babies under a year old.

Changes in the maintenance allowance and age-related fee will only come into place as a carer takes a new placement or as a child passes through an age-barrier. Changes to the skills related fee at level 1 to 2 will be made following the review which determines that the carers are suitable to move to the next level. However the move to level 3 will be made in the April following the successful completion of the Diploma and a review which states that the carers are meeting the requirements for progression to level 3. Carers can also go down a level if they are not providing all the requirements detailed for payment at their current level. This would be as a result of a recommendation at their annual review and would be implemented immediately.

Some connected person carers will no longer be able to progress beyond level one but there are very few connected person carers who have ever wanted to do this and it would not be a proper use of public funds to train and pay at enhanced skills rates carers who are caring for members of their own family.

6. Consultations

There have already been initial consultations with foster carers and the Foster Carer Association and carers are aware of and have already made their views known regarding a number of the proposals detailed here. But there is a need for further, more considered consultation now that there are specific proposals and more detailed figures available.

Two consultation sessions have already been arranged for 19th February one in the morning and one in the evening to ensure as many carers as possible will be able to attend. The proposals will be shared with carers in advance of the meeting and carers views gathered on the 4 key recommendations detailed at 2.0 above. Consideration has also been given to the use of the Council's electronic feedback system via UEngage and there is no reason why we should not use both methods simultaneously to reach as many carers as possible although advice from the Communications Department is that as this is a consultation with a specific group of people this would not be necessary.

Guidance on requirements for new Fostering Levels – April 2018

1. Maintenance Allowances

All maintenance allowances are paid in line with the Government Guidance on National Minimum Standards for Allowances and will be adjusted each year in line with the revised Government Rates

2. Fostering Fee – Level 1 @ £100 per week

Entry Requirements at starting point of fostering journey.

Initial Requirements:-

- Some experience of childcare; parenting/looking after others children (**Desirable but not essential**)

Or

- Some experience of caring for adults in social care settings (**Desirable but not essential**)
- Evidence of commitment to develop through training; attend support groups; be mentored by an experienced foster carer.
- Any relevant previous training – any courses attended through previous or current employment which relate to the fostering role will not need to be completed again.
- Foster carers at level 1 will have completed the Skills to Foster programme and will have been approved as foster carers. (Including Connected Persons)

Expectations at level 1

- Attend 4 days training; 2 days training to be identified by the Supervising Social Worker and 2 days relevant training identified by the carers themselves. Training hours can include attendance at support groups that have been considered as having a training element attached.
- Attend support groups ; up to 10 per year – minimum of 5
- Undertake an annual Performance and Development Review
- Complete the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers within 1st year post approval
- Contribute to Fostering Service development as described below

Expectation is that most foster carers will remain @ Level 1 for 2 years post approval

Progression

Progression –

In order to progress from level 1 to level 2 carers are required to demonstrate that in addition to the above they have:-

- Supported Information Evenings

Or

- Supported other marketing and recruitment initiatives

Or

- Worked with fostering and child care teams around policies and procedures.

And provide

- Evidence that they have supported a child(ren) to make positive progress as measured by the child's Care Plan
- Evidence that they have applied their training to support children with complex needs, for example, with issues around attachment
- Evidence that they are able to care for more challenging children

Foster carers ready to progress from level 1 to 2 will be ready to start the Diploma for progression to Level 2 to Level 3.

The Fostering Review at the end of year two will consider whether the level 1 carers are ready to move to level 2. Usually Level 2 carers would be undertaking the Diploma in the next cohort and will become level 3 carers at the end of the financial year in which they complete their Diploma.

There may be some carers who prefer to remain at level 1 for a longer period or there may be those who choose to progress to level 2 but do not immediately undertake the Diploma but remain at level 2 until they feel they are ready to progress.

There may be some carers who are not considered at the review to have demonstrated sufficient development or commitment to the Service to progress to level 2 and they will remain at level 1 until the requirements have been met.

Foster Carer who successfully progress to level 2 will receive the new skills level payments from the date of the review.

Progression

3. Fostering Fee – Level 2 @ £150 per week Intermediate level on the Foster Carer Journey

At Level 2 carers will usually have been foster carers for at least 2 years.

Expectations at level 2

- Attend 4 days training; 2 days training to be identified by the Supervising Social Worker and 2 days relevant training identified by the carers themselves. Training hours can include attendance at support groups that have been considered as having a training element attached.
- Attend support groups ; up to 10 per year – minimum of 5
- Undertake an annual Performance and Development Review
- Have completed the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers
- Contribute to Fostering Service development as described below

Progression –

In order to progress from level 2 to level 3 in addition to the above all Foster carers at Level 2 will be expected to and be able to demonstrate that they have assisted in the development of the Fostering Service through either:

- Attendance at Information Evenings

Or

- Support marketing and recruitment initiatives

Or

- Work with fostering and child care teams around policies and procedures

And

- Buddying other carers under the mentoring scheme

Or

- Supporting other carers in training or with TSDS

And provide

- Evidence that they have supported a child(ren) to make positive progress as measured by care plan and evidence to be provided in fostering review report
- Evidence that they have applied their training to support children with complex needs, for example, with issues around attachment

- Evidence that they have successfully completed the level 3 Diploma
- Evidence that they are able to care successfully for more complex and troubled children

The increase in skills payment for those successful in progressing from level 2 to 3 will be implemented at the end of the financial year in which they complete the Diploma. If there are any concerns which would prevent the carers progressing at this point a Foster Carer Review must be held to consider the evidence and address the concerns. Carers could be prevented from progressing even if they have the Diploma if they are not contributing to the service in the ways described above.

4. Fostering Fee – Level 3 @ £360 per week Advanced Level Carers

At this level carers will be expected to be fully contributing to Service development, providing assistance and support to less experienced carers and caring for the most challenging children or supporting the more difficult moves to adoption or other forms of long-term care.

Expectations at level 3

- Attend 4 days training; 2 days training to be identified by the Supervising Social Worker and 2 days relevant training identified by the carers themselves. Training hours can include attendance at support groups that have been considered as having a training element attached.
- Attend support groups ; up to 10 per year – minimum of 5
- Undertake an annual Performance and Development Review
- Have completed the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers

Contribute to Fostering Service development as described below by:-

- Attendance at Information Evenings
Or
- Support for marketing and recruitment initiatives
Or
- Work with fostering and child care teams around policies and procedures
And
- Participating in the mentoring scheme and taking a lead role where required
Or
- Supporting other carers in training or with TSDS
Or
- Providing training to other carers, members of the fostering team and other partners as required

And provide

- Evidence that they have supported a child(ren) to make positive progress as measured by care plan and evidence to be provided in fostering review report
- Evidence that they have applied their training to support children with complex needs, for example, with issues around attachment
- Evidence that they have successfully completed the level 3 Diploma
- Evidence that they are able to care successfully for more complex and troubled children and/or manage more complex moves

In order to maintain their skills level payment at level 3 carers will be required to demonstrate on a regular basis, but specifically at their annual review, that they are meeting all the above expectations. Failure to do so could result in a drop in skills level payments back to level 2.

5. Specialist Fee – Level 4 @ £360 per week

This Level is fundamentally different to the other levels in that it is not related to the foster carer's level of training and competency but to the requirements of the child/ren they care for.

- Children with complex needs – effectively those children with an allocated worker from the Children's Disability Team or who would meet the criteria for referral to the Children with Disabilities Team
- Potentially other schemes still to be developed to meet identified needs

Foster carers at Level 4 will be paid the Skill Based Fee in accordance with Level 3 for the period of time they have a child/ren in placement that qualifies for the criteria. Once the child moves on from placement the foster carers will revert back to the Skill Level they have been previously. If such placements continue for more than 2/3 months carers will need to be undertaking the normal requirements for progression to ensure that they do not lose out when the placement come to an end.

6. Age-related skills payments

These will be paid to carers at all skills levels according to the age of the children in placement. However age-related skills payments will not be paid to connected persons carers.

7. Transferable Skills Immediate entry at level 2

In certain situations it will be possible for carers with appropriate qualifications and experience to join the service at level 2 (intermediate level) without being a level 1 carer at any time.

- Evidence of relevant qualifications @ Level 3 with Adults e.g Adult Mental Health or Learning Disabilities
- Previous Adult Care experience of more than 2 years in an Adult Care setting – as above not elderly settings

Progression

- Carers joining at level 2 will be expected to complete the Diploma as soon as possible for progression to level 3. However they will be expected to have successfully completed at least one year as a foster carer before they move to level 3.

Immediate entry at Level 3

As above in certain situations it will be possible for carers with appropriate qualifications and experience to join the service at level 3 (advanced level) without having been either a level 1 or a level 2 carer.

- Evidence @ Degree Level Teaching; Social Work or Nursing or similar professional qualification with children.

Or

- Evidence of other relevant qualifications @ Level 3 with children.

And

- Post qualification experience of more than 2 years in a children's setting

Or

Previous experience of working with children for more than 2 years in a Child Care setting. This could be voluntary experience if the experience is sufficiently substantial.

Carers joining at level 3 will be required to provide placements for children over 5 or sibling groups of at least 2 from their first placement. In the event of a carer who enters the service at level 3 taking a single child under 5 they will be paid at level 1 in the first year and level 2 for the 2 following years. Thereafter they will be paid at level 3 regardless of the age of the child.

Carers joining at level 3 will be expected to demonstrate all the requirements for level 3 during their first year in fostering and subsequent years. Failure to do so could result in a drop down to level 2 until the requirements are met.

8. Connected Persons

Connected person requirements

- Attend 4 days training; 2 days training to be identified by the Supervising Social Worker and 2 days relevant training identified by the carers themselves every year. Training hours can include attendance at support groups that have been considered as having a training element attached.
- Attend support groups ; up to 10 per year – minimum of 5
- Undertake an annual Performance and Development Review
- Complete the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers within 1st year post approval

All Connected Persons Carers should attend pre-approval training (Skills to Foster) before approval wherever possible. Level 1 payment to be agreed once carer is approved by Panel. If it has not been possible to complete the pre-approval training prior to Panel Approval Connected Person carers must complete this training as well as their TDS before their first annual review. If both pieces of training have not been completed by the first review the carer will lose the skills fee and will only be paid the maintenance allowance until both pieces of training have been completed.

Progression

- Connected Persons cannot progress beyond Level 1 unless they are further assessed as Mainstream Foster Carers.
- Connected Persons are expected to successfully complete the Department for Education Training, Support and Development Standards Foster Carers 2012. This programme sets out the National Minimum benchmark for what foster carers are expected to aspire to know and undertake within the first 18 months of being approved. The expectation in Barnsley is that Connected Persons will complete this before their first annual review (i.e. within 12 months of Approval)

Connected Persons Payments

- Will receive a maintenance allowance for the child/children placed with them from the start of the placement at the NMS rate.
- Level 1 skills payment will begin once they have been approved by Fostering Panel as foster carers. This will end if they have not completed preparation training and TSDS by the time of their first review until such time as they have completed the training.
- Connected Persons cannot progress beyond Level 1 unless a further assessment is presented to Fostering Panel to approve them as carers for unrelated children.
- Connected Persons do not receive age related skills fees.

Weekly Fostering Allowance

The weekly Fostering Allowance from April 2015 is based on the National Minimum Fostering Rates:

The weekly allowance is based on what is recommended by Central Government. Any increase will be based on the rate of inflation that Central Government recommend.

Payments are made every fortnight in arrears. This is directly into the foster carer's bank account unless an alternative method of payment is requested.

The weekly allowance is paid in respect of the child in placement. The allowance covers the following:

- **Food – including school meals**
- **Health and hygiene**
- **Toys and play equipment**
- **Activities including school trips and some residential trips**
- **Clothing**
- **Pocket money**
- **Mobile phone top ups**
- **Travel to school**
- **Contribution to household costs, for example, heating, lighting**
- **Bedding and replacement items**
- **Day to day transport, either by car or public transport**
- **Family day trips**
- **Personal allowance e.g. cinema, bowling, swimming**

Miscellaneous Finance

Section A – Additional Payments to Foster Carers

Holiday, Birthday and Festivals Allowances

These payments are in relation to the individual child and will be paid annually.

Holiday payments will automatically be made in May. The holiday payment is used to fund a holiday for the child or pay for alternative extra curriculum activities e.g. over the summer holidays.

For those foster children who were not in placement in May there will be some discretion to pay the annual holiday allowance at a later date. The Fostering Support Worker should submit a specific request detailing the specific reasons for making the payment to the Head of Service Children in Care

Birthday payments will be paid within 1 month prior to the child's birthday. This payment covers additional expenditure at birthdays.

Christmas and other Festival payments will be paid for any child in placement on the date of the festival which is significant to them

Clothing Allowances

An initial clothing allowance is not paid automatically. Fostering Support Workers should always discuss the child's clothing and other belongings with the Foster Carer at the point of placement. If there is an identified need for an initial clothing allowance the FSW should make a specific request on behalf of the Foster Carer to the Fostering Team Manager.

Clothing	
Age	Max
0 to 4	£75
5 to 10	£100
11 to 15	£120
16+	£120

This payment is only paid when the child is first admitted to Care. The purchasing of additional clothes is then to be budgeted from the weekly allowance in accordance with the calculation of 15% of the maintenance allowance per week.

Maximum payment of £200 if child needs additional equipment such as a holdall or other storage equipment.

Miscellaneous Finance

School Uniform

When a child changes school or arrives in Care without the appropriate school uniform an additional uniform allowance can be paid. If there is an identified need for a school uniform allowance the FSW should make a specific request on behalf of the Foster Carer to the Fostering Team Manager.

Uniform	
Age	Max
5 to 11	£40
11 to 16	£80

If a school has additional specialist uniform requirements these should be discussed with the FSW and if supported this should be included in the request to the Team Manager and an additional discretionary amount can be agreed up to £75 for 5-11 and £150 for 11-16.

The further replacement and purchasing of school uniform is the responsibility of the foster carer and should be budgeted from the weekly allowance.

Extra Curricular Activities

Barnsley MBC is keen to encourage all children in care to experience a wide range of extra curriculum activities such as participation in sport, music and other hobbies. Foster carers will generally be expected to fund such activities from the weekly allowance.

In general extracurricular activities should equate to 20% of the weekly maintenance allowance.

If a child has additional educational needs or needs to take part in residential visits or other developmental activities through school which are over and above the usual day trips or purchase of additional materials expected of every parent the first approach should be in conjunction with the Child's Social Worker to the school to use the Pupil Premium which is paid for every individual looked after child in each school.

If the Pupil Premium is not available and yet the need for the additional activity remains the Fostering Support Worker should submit a request to the Team Manager on behalf of the Foster Carer and an exceptional payment could be considered.

The Pupil Premium should also be considered to fund any low level therapeutic support needs a child might have which could be reasonably provided by schools.

Transport Costs

The weekly fostering allowance contains 5 % of a transport element for day to day journeys including school runs and normal medical visits. This equates to 25 miles per week per child.

Any claims for additional mileage should be completed and processed by the Fostering Support Supervising Social Worker on a monthly basis. The first 25 miles per child should be recorded for illustration purposes but the cost of this is included in the weekly allowance for the child. Any additional mileage will be paid at the following rates. Any regular exceptional mileage for contact or to attend a particular school for example must be agreed with the child's

Miscellaneous Finance

social worker and recorded in the child's placement plan and subsequently at the child's review. The FSW should also make a note on the Foster Carers file.

The current mileage rate is 45p per mile and this will be paid if a child requires transport in excess of 25 miles per week.

On any single journey of over 50 miles the additional miles will be paid at 20p per mile

Car parking costs associated with contact or other agreed specific journeys required by the Care Plan will be met. Car parking costs shouldn't be incurred taking a child to school. Any exceptional circumstances should be discussed with the Support Worker.

Mileage and parking for Foster Carer training is included in the foster carer's fee. As far as possible the Service will endeavour to provide training in venues which do not incur a parking cost.

Where training would involve travel outside of the Borough mileage can be paid but should be agreed with the Fostering Support Worker in advance. Carers attending training together would be encouraged to travel together to reduce the cost.

Mileage can be paid for attendance at Fostering Support Groups but carers are encouraged to attend the group closest to their home although it is recognised that there may be good reasons for attending one at another time. These alternative arrangements should be confirmed with the Fostering Support Worker

If a foster carer is receiving Disability Living Allowance for a child there will be no additional mileage or car parking paid for any medical visits in respect of that child. (See separate policy and guidance on Foster Carers and Disability Living Allowance)

Initial Setting up payments

An initial set-up grant of up to £500 can be agreed as part of the initial assessment and referenced in the Form F. Requirements should be itemised and agreed as essential. Foster Carers must produce receipts for items purchased

Any exceptional additional payments must be recommended by the Fostering Assessor and agreed by the Head of Service.

The replacement of equipment is to be budgeted for in the weekly allowance.

Any exceptional equipment replacement costs must be recommended by the Fostering Support Worker and agreed by the Head of Service. Foster carers must produce receipts for the items purchased.

Miscellaneous Finance

Section B – Guidance to Foster Carers

Weekly Pocket Money Rates

All school age children (5 years plus) should receive a minimum weekly pocket money payment. This should be given in cash to the child weekly or a proportion of it, with the rest saved. Pocket money is not to be confused with other expenditure given to the child for activities. For any child in a long term placement, the foster carer is expected to open a bank account for savings. For any children in a short term placement, any money not given in hand should be saved and recorded. The child will then take this money with them when they move on from the placement.

Pocket Money	
Age	Max
5	£2.50
6	£3.00
7	£3.50
8	£4.00
9	£4.50
10	£5.00
11	£6.00
12	£7.00
13	£8.00
14	£9.00
15	£10.00
16	£15.00

The amounts above are only given as guidance and actual payments should be agreed with Supervising Social Workers on their visits and recorded on foster carers' files.

Insurance Claims

Foster carers will be expected to have the relevant insurance cover for any damage (see advice and guidance about what is required on the Fostering Network site)

In any cases where a claim is declined by the foster carer's own insurers the issue should be raised with the Fostering Support Worker.

Car use

All foster carers, where applicable, are expected to have fully comprehensive car insurance. The insurance certificate needs to state the car is used for business use or as a foster carer. It is the foster carer's responsibility to ensure all documentation is kept up to date in relation to cars, e.g. MOT certificate and renewal of insurance. These documents must be available for the Supervising Social Worker to check as part of the Annual Health & Safety Check which is required for the foster carers review panel. All foster carers who drive must have a valid driving licence which will be checked annually by the Supervising Social worker.

Miscellaneous Finance

Child Care

Foster carers should look to other foster carers to provide child care on a reciprocal basis under the delegated authority arrangements.

Overnight stays

Any arrangement under delegated authority involving overnight stays must be notified in advance with the Child's Social Worker and the Fostering Support Worker. This does not go against the carer's delegated authority to agree the placement but is included in this section as there may be issues around payment should the arrangements continue for more than one night. It is acknowledged it may not always be possible to notify anyone of an overnight stay of a single night but certainly both the Child's Social Worker and the Support Worker should always be aware of stays of more than one night.

Retainer Payments

Any situation where a retainer payment might be appropriate must be recommended by the Child's Social worker and the Fostering Support Worker and agreed by the Head of Service.

Refer a Friend

Any foster carer who refers a friend to the Fostering Service and they are subsequently approved as a BMBC foster carer will receive a payment of £300. The payment will be made to the referring foster carer once a child is placed. This must be a full-time placement and only one payment is made per recommendation.

Overpayments

Occasionally mistakes are made and foster carers are overpaid. It is the foster carer's responsibility to notify their Support Worker and most importantly Finance Section as soon as possible. Finance will then make an arrangement with the foster carer to repay the overpayment.

Review

This document and the payment scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis

Guidance to Foster Carers Considering an Application for a Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order – February 2016

Taking out a Special Guardianship Order or in some cases an Adoption Order offers permanence and a positive family option for many children in care and their carers. Where an SGO or an Adoption Order is made the child or young person ceases to be looked after and parental responsibility transfers to the Special Guardian or Adoptive parents. This can have a number of beneficial effects for the child and their carers, for example there is no longer a requirement to have a six monthly review and the family are no longer subject to the kinds of checks and oversight which many families find intrusive. With an SGO or an Adoption Order in place families are free to organise their family arrangements to best meet their needs and those of the child. Carers can make all the decisions about a child's schooling, health, holidays, leisure activities and so on without reference to the child's social worker, the child's review or the child's birth parents. Most importantly for the child they have a family which has made a commitment to them and where they can grow up securely and safely without having to wonder whether they may have to move again at any point.

Where an SGO or an Adoption Order is in the child's best interest Barnsley Childrens Social Care are committed to assisting and resolving any financial or support barriers creating a disincentive to foster carers. Because every foster carer and every child are different individual arrangements may have to be put in place to meet individual need but there are some general principles which can be established.

The legal frameworks behind an SGO and an Adoption Order are obviously different and there will need to be careful consideration about which would be the most appropriate order in each case. For younger children – generally those under 12 – particularly those who do not have a strong, well established relationship with their birth parents or extended family Adoption might be the preferred route. Adoption breaks all legal ties with the birth family and Courts are generally reluctant to consider adoption where a meaningful relationship with the birth family exists even if it is impossible for the child to be cared for by their birth family. Special Guardianship was created to meet the need for the child to have a settled family life and for carers to be able to feel secure in their care of their child without making a full and complete legal break with the birth family. A Special Guardianship Order gives parental responsibility to the Special Guardian with the birth parent retaining some parental responsibility but with no powers to exercise it.

Special Guardianship Orders

Key points

1. A Special Guardianship Order gives the Special Guardian parental responsibility but, unlike adoption, does not completely remove parental responsibility from the parents. However, a special guardianship order severely limits the parents' options to exercise their responsibility and should be viewed as providing legal permanence for children for whom adoption is not appropriate i.e. where the legal relationship of the child with their birth families should not be severed.
2. An SGO can provide an alternative means of providing a child in care with permanence.
3. An SGO provides a firm foundation on which to build a lifelong permanent relationship between the child and the special guardian.

General Guidance

4. Special Guardianship Orders can be made in circumstances where children are not looked after. In these circumstances, it would be via a private law application which appoints a person to be a child's special guardian. Applications can be made by:
 - Any guardian of the child,
 - A council foster carer with whom the child has lived with for one year immediately preceding the application providing this was itself within a three year period,
 - Anyone who holds a Child Arrangements Order in respect of the child
 - Anyone with whom the child has lived with for three of the last five years
 - Where the child is in care, anyone with the consent of the local authority
 - Anyone who has the consent of those with parental responsibility for the child
 - Any person who has the leave of the court to apply
5. The Special Guardian will have parental responsibility for the child and this may be exercised to the exclusion of others with parental responsibility. However there are restrictions e.g. a special guardian still requires either the written consent of every person who has parental responsibility, or leave of the court to cause the child to be known by a new surname or to remove the child from the United Kingdom for longer than three months.
6. A court may make a Special Guardianship Order in any family proceedings concerning the welfare of the child if they consider an order should be made, even where no application for a Special Guardianship Order has been made providing the recipient of the order is in agreement.
7. No Special Guardianship Order can be made without a report from the Local Authority supporting the suitability of the proposed Guardian(s).
8. A Special Guardianship Order ceases to have effect when a young person reaches 18 years old or when the order is revoked or superseded by another order e.g. Child Arrangements Order or Care Order.
9. Children who were in care immediately before the granting of a special guardianship order will qualify for advice and assistance under Section 24 (1A) of the Children Act 1989. This will be offered through Leaving Care provision. The qualifying determination does not apply to children subject to Child Arrangements Orders.
10. A special guardian can request an assessment of need for special guardianship support services (including a financial assessment) at any time after the making of a special guardianship order. In cases where the prospective special guardian is the child's foster carer, the court application fee and any legal costs incurred will be met by the council if the local authority is supporting the application.
11. Legal costs incurred as a result of the special guardianship application must be met by the prospective special guardians if they are not foster carers, or if the application is via a private law application.
12. Special guardianship support services will only be provided following the completion of an assessment of need taking into consideration the individual circumstances of the case and the resources that are available locally.
13. Special guardians will be encouraged to access mainstream services wherever necessary.

Adoption Orders

Key points

Section 46 – Adoption orders

1. An adoption order is an order made by the court on an application under section 50 or 51 giving parental responsibility for a child to the adopters or adopter.
2. The making of an adoption order operates to extinguish –
 - (a) the parental responsibility which any person other than the adopters or adopter has for the adopted child immediately before the making of the order,
 - (b) any order under the 1989 Act or the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/755 (N.I. 2)),
 - (c) any order under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c. 36) other than an excepted order, and
 - (d) any duty arising by virtue of an agreement or an order of a court to make payments, so far as the payments are in respect of the adopted child's maintenance or upbringing for any period after the making of the adoption order.

“Excepted order” means an order under section 9, 11(1)(d) or 13 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 or an exclusion order within the meaning of section 76(1) of that Act.
3. An adoption order –
 - (a) does not affect parental responsibility so far as it relates to any period before the making of the order, and
 - (b) in the case of an order made on an application under section 51(2) by the partner of a parent of the adopted child, does not affect the parental responsibility of that parent or any duties of that parent within subsection (2)(d).
4. Subsection (2)(d) does not apply to a duty arising by virtue of an agreement –
 - (a) which constitutes a trust, or
 - (b) which expressly provides that the duty is not to be extinguished by the making of an adoption order.
5. An adoption order may be made even if the child to be adopted is already an adopted child.
6. Before making an adoption order, the court must consider whether there should be arrangements for allowing any person contact with the child; and for that purpose the court must consider any existing or proposed arrangements and obtain any views of the parties to the proceedings.

General Guidance

Section 38 – Local authority foster parents

1. This section applies if the child's home is with local authority foster parents.
2. If –
 - (a) the child has had his home with the foster parents at all times during the period of five years ending with the removal and the foster parents have given notice of intention to adopt, or
 - (b) an application has been made for leave under section 42(6) and has not been disposed of,the following persons may remove the child.
3. They are –
 - (a) a person who has the court's leave,
 - (b) a local authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any enactment, other than section 20(8) of the 1989 Act.
4. If subsection (2) does not apply but –
 - (a) the child has had his home with the foster parents at all times during the period of one year ending with the removal, and
 - (b) the foster parents have given notice of intention to adopt,the following persons may remove the child.
5. They are –
 - (a) a person with parental responsibility for the child who is exercising the power in section 20(8) of the 1989 Act,
 - (b) a person who has the court's leave,
 - (c) a local authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any enactment, other than section 20(8) of the 1989 Act.

Generally foster carers making an application to adopt or take a Special Guardianship Order for a child in their care will have the support of the child's social worker. In the case of adoption there will either be a placement order in place or Children's Social Care will make an application for a placement order. However where a child has been living with the carers for more than one year foster carers can make an independent application for either an SGO or an Adoption order. Where the application is not supported by the Local Authority the following arrangements regarding financial support will not apply either to SGO or Adoption applications

Financial Arrangements for both SGO and Adoption Orders

In Barnsley allowances are aligned so the basic arrangements for payments remain the same. Where a child has been placed with a BMBC foster carer for over 2 years and the plan for either Adoption or SGO has been agreed at Permanence Panel Barnsley will match the current level of financial support until the child reaches

General Guidance

eighteen. The SGO or Adoption Allowance will increase overtime in line with annual fostering allowances uplifts (less any child benefit or child tax credits received for the child. The fostering fee will continue at the level paid when the order was made.

Children with a disability may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance (Care and Mobility element) and children reaching 16 may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance. From the age of 16 DLA now transfers to a Personal Independence Payment.

No previous foster carer considering taking out an SGO or an Adoption Order will be financially disadvantaged by doing so where this is an agreed plan supported by the Service as an alternative to long-term fostering. Carers choosing to make an application where the Department's plan is for adoption will not receive financial support.

Any previous arrangements agreed with BMBC Foster Carers will remain as agreed but all future arrangements will follow these principles.

Approved connected persons carers who take an SGO or adopt the child in their care will continue to receive any skills payment and the future allowances will continue to be non-means-tested will continue to receive any skills payment for 2 years from the date of the order and future allowances will continue to be age adjusted and non-means-tested.

Legal Fees

Normally the child will be subject to a Care Order and BMBC will apply to discharge the Care Order and invite the Court to make an SGO or a Placement Order so there should be no financial implications for foster carers from legal proceedings.

Where a birth parent might challenge the making of the order or request contact orders BMBC would consider reasonable requests for additional legal support to the carers if they are to be made party to the Proceedings

SGO and Adoption Support

All former foster carers will be allocated a worker from the Permanence Support Team for one year from the making of the order and this could be extended where necessary.

All former Foster Carers will have an SGO/Adoption Support plan which will be reviewed annually by the Permanence Support Team.

Contact Issues

Given every situation is different contact arrangements will need to be discussed and set up on an individual basis. Contact arrangements will always be based on the best interests of the child or young person. These arrangements should be agreed at the point of making the orders but should be reviewed, with the Permanence Team if necessary, on a regular basis as children's needs are likely to change over time.

Therapeutic Support

Previous Foster Carers taking SGOs or Adoption Orders will be able to access Barnsley's Consultation Clinic which brings together professionals from CAMHS and Children's Social Care to identify the specific therapeutic needs of individual children.

In situations where the child or young person requires very specific or long-term therapeutic support this will be included in the Special Guardianship or Adoption Support Plan. The Support Plan will include all of the arrangements and agreements about where the support will be provided and how long it will be provided before being renewed. At the moment support for both adopters and special guardians is available from the Adoption Support Fund where children were previously 'looked after' and in the situation of former foster carers taking these orders all children will have been previously in care.

General Guidance

Permanence Team

Barnsley has a small permanence team which can be contacted by any special guardian or adopter for advice and assistance. The service can offer a range of options such as telephone advice, home visits, links to support groups, specific training opportunities, including behaviour management groups and therapeutic parenting groups. The service is accessed through the Fostering Service on 775876 or via e-mail businesssupportfostering@barnsley.gov.uk

BMBC Guidance – Delegated Authority

Regulations and National Minimum Standards (2011) make it clear that social workers should be liaising closely with parents, foster carers and children during the Placement Planning stage to ensure that agreement around who is responsible for which aspects of a child's life is in place right from the start. This process is known as Delegated Authority. The decision making regarding Delegation of Authority differs for children who are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, and for those placed on an Order via the Court.

Delegated Authority affects the following:

Young People: need to know who can make a decision on their behalf, that there is no stigmatism as a result of them being in care and that they will not miss out due to delay from Social Care.

Parents: need to know that they remain important in the child's life when their child becomes looked after and that they remain party to the decision making process where this is appropriate. Parents need to understand what responsibilities can be delegated to foster carers and how this will impact on their child.

Foster carers: need to be clear about what they can and cannot agree in order to ensure clarity and consistency.

Social Workers: need to be clear about the Department's policy in relation to Delegated Authority in order to provide a clear and consistent message to everyone involved in the care planning process.

References/Legislation/Policy

The Children Act 1989

- Sections 2 to 4A concern parental responsibility
- Sections 20 to 23 concern looked-after children.
- Sections 31 to 34 concern care orders.

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010:

- Regulation 9 and schedule 2 concern the Placement Plan.

The Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010):

- Chapter 3 concerns the placement and has sections on the placement plan and shared responsibilities and consents.

The Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance Volume 4: Fostering Services:

- Chapter 3 contains a section on foster carers' delegated authority and it also refers to delegated authority in sections on contact with family and friends; achieving healthy outcomes for looked-after children; and educational achievement.

Delegated Policy

The Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance Volume 1: Court Orders

- Chapter 3 contains a section on the effect of care orders.

The revised National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services(2011):

- Standard 6 refers to delegation of decisions about health
- Standard 7 refers to delegation of decision-making about education, leisure activities, overnight stays, holidays and personal issues such as haircuts
- Standard 9 refers to delegation of decision-making about contact.

IRO handbook: statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children (2010)

The Delegation of Authority is:

- To enable the foster carers to make day to day decisions about a child who is placed with them wherever possible
- To 'normalise' the experience of Looked After Children and ensure they are not missing out on valuable experiences.
- To ensure that there is considered thinking about who is best placed to make decisions.
- To ensure that forward planning is in place at the start of a placement or can be put into place without any delay at a later stage.
- To ensure that foster carers are treated as professionals and are accepted as having an integral role in the 'Team Around the Child'.
- To ensure clarity and transparency for everyone involved in a child's life.

The Delegation of Authority is not about:

- Providing a blanket approach and set of responses to any child's situation
- Excluding social workers or birth parents from making decisions
- Reducing the attention to risk
- Leaving Foster Carers to get on with the task and 'going it alone'.
- Leaving Foster carers exposed and feeling 'punished' when things go wrong.

Delegated Policy

Key Principles:

- Effective decision making and effective delegation of authority should be in place to minimise undue delay in the decision making process relating to a child in Local Authority Care.
- A child has the right to maximise on opportunities in life, to ensure they are able to enjoy their childhood and to enjoy a full and happy family life.
- In practice Delegating Authority means working out, as far as possible in advance, where decisions may need to be made before they need to be made.
- Parents' wishes and feelings should be considered when decisions about Delegating Authority are being discussed. Parents should be fully informed and feel supported in the decision making processes about their child.
- Children's wishes and feelings should be considered when decisions about Delegating Authority are being discussed.
- Foster carers should be enabled and supported to take every day decisions about the children in their care – especially when the placement is determined as Long Term.
- Foster carers' wishes and feelings should also be considered. The foster carers' skills, experience and knowledge of the fostering task are essential to a consideration of Delegating Authority.
- Delegation of Authority should be based on a thorough and full assessment of need and risk regarding the individual child
- Foster carers should have the relevant training to consider risk assessments when they are responsible for a child in placement and day to day decision making.

Key Practice Points:

- Delegated Authority is necessary to record key decisions regarding a child/young person in placement and ensuring the day to day needs of a child are met with the least disruption.
- It is essential that a child feels important in the family with which he/she is living in and is able to experience a normal family life without any due delay.
- The Delegated Authority Decisions should be completed at a Placement Planning meeting prior to the placement of a child or within 5 days of the placement starting.
- Parents of a Looked After child should receive all the information relating to their child and have the opportunity to discuss this if they don't understand the process or have a concern about any issues in relation to the placement or Delegated Authority.
- The sharing of all relevant information relating to a child's placement with foster carers is essential but not enough in itself. Foster carers need appropriate, up to date advice, guidance and good quality information to be able to make decisions relating to a child/young person in their care. It is essential that Social workers share this information with foster carers, as soon as it is available, to ensure that they are well informed to make day to day decisions.
- The Delegation of Authority should be revisited at the child's statutory review and considered at foster carers annual reviews. Any changes should be recorded in the Placement Plan.

Delegated Policy

Parental Responsibility and Delegation

Delegated Responsibility means that a person who has Parental Responsibility for a child may arrange for some or all of their responsibilities to be met by another person in some circumstances.

If a child is placed in Local Authority care under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the Local Authority does not have the Parental Responsibility to make decisions for a child. An agreement needs to be reached in regard to the parents Delegating Authority to the Local Authority and Foster Carers.

A Foster Carer, or a person who does not have parental responsibility but has care of a child/young person, may do what is 'reasonable' in all the circumstances for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child/young person's welfare in an emergency. If no agreement has been made, the Foster Carer may do what is 'reasonable' (section 3(5) Children Act 1989). What is 'reasonable' will depend on the urgency of the situation and how practical it is to consult a person with parental responsibility.

Who can Delegate Authority

If the Local Authority has an Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or Care Order the Local authority has the authority to delegate.

If the Local authority does not have any of the above Orders, it is the parent or someone else who has who has the parental responsibility who must agree to the Delegation of Authority to a Foster Carer.

There are some instances when a young person who is 16 years old or over, or potentially under the age of 16 but who is mature enough to do so (Fraser or 'Gillick' competent') has the ability to consent in their own right.

- From the age of 16 a young person can consent to their own Care Plan if they are Looked After by the Local Authority and there is no court order in place.
- A young person aged 16 (or younger if considered by medical staff to have sufficient understanding of the implication of treatment) can consent to their own medical treatment.

Placement Plan

The Children Act 1989 Volume 2 Statutory Guidance on Care Planning, Placement and Review states that a Placement Plan is a legal requirement and requires all Local Authorities to ensure that this is drawn up prior to the placement of a child in foster care or within five days of the start of a placement. Copies of any Placement Plan should be made available to the foster carers, parents and the Independent Reviewing Officer. Key tasks, consent and decisions should be anticipated and clearly identified in the Placement Plan which is agreed by those involved with the Planning of a Placement.

The Placement Plan is a living document and should be review accordingly at regular intervals. The Placement Plan should be agreed by the Local Authority, Parents, Foster Carers and the Child.

It is essential and good practice that a Placement Planning meeting is held in order to agree the Placement Plan. Attending at this meeting should be the social worker, supervising social worker, foster carer(s), parent(s) (if appropriate), and young person

Delegated Policy

Consultation and communication is vital where there is a decision or consent to Delegate Authority to someone else.

It is important that thinking ahead in respect of the age and interests of a child/young person takes place as part of the Placement Plan. Consideration should be given to what is likely to come up throughout the duration of the placement, predicting what decisions are likely to be made, and agreement regarding who takes responsibility. Prior planning and thinking ahead will prevent undue delay at a later stage.

Responsibility and liability is a consideration in the delegation of authority. If harm comes to a child in foster care the foster carers can be held responsible and where negligence is proven they can be individually sued. Barnsley Fostering Service has legal indemnity insurance which stipulates that arrangements have been made for foster carers to meet the legal requirements by reason of the placement.

Placement Planning

The Placement Plan replaces the previous Foster Placement Agreement and is now contained in the child/young person's Care Plan.

The Placement Plan is the format used to identify the appropriate delegations.

The Placement Plan should be completed for each individual child, with decisions, consents, agreements and any additional notes or comments to ensure clarity and consistency.

The Placement Plan should be reviewed at each Statutory LAC Review.

The Placement Plan should contain all the necessary consents and key decisions in as much detail as possible. If there are two foster carers in a household, the Placement Plan should ensure that their roles are clarified and recorded.

The Placement Plan should be made available to the Parents, Foster Carers and the Child/ young person as part of the Care Plan. The plan should be signed by all parties involved in the decision making.

It is important that the Foster Carer signs the Placement Plan.

The Placement Plan should not be an exhaustive list of possibilities for any child in any placement but should consider the needs of the individual child and the skills, knowledge and experience of the individual foster carers.

Delegated Policy

Assessment and Delegation

Decisions regarding Delegated Authority and the level of Delegated Authority should be based on good quality assessment of need and risk for the individual child/young person and the individual Foster Carers.

The balance and distribution of responsibilities will differ in individual placements depending on factors such as:

- The age and views of the child/young person
- The experience, skills and knowledge of the Foster Carer
- The legislative basis of the placement
- The nature and length of placement
- The role and involvement of the parent.

Delegation in short term placements will differ to long term or permanent placements where the distribution of responsibilities should support the key relationship between the young person and the Foster Carer.

- Before delegating tasks to a Foster Carer the Supervising Social Worker must consider the carer's level of training, experience, skills, knowledge, experience and confidence.
- The areas of delegation to a Carer should be discussed in supervisory visits and statutory child care visits to ensure that such decisions are working in practice.
- Foster Carers will be covered by legal indemnity insurance and the Placement Plan will set out in writing the arrangements for meeting any legal liability of the Foster Carer by reason of the placement.

The Review of the Placement Plan and Delegation of Authority

The Delegation of Authority should be revisited at the child's statutory review by the Independent Reviewing Officer and this Delegation of Authority should be reviewed along with other issues relating to the Care Plan.

Particular attention should be paid to any areas that have not been considered or had not been anticipated at the original placement planning meeting

Consideration should be given to the balance of the delegation of authority.

Any changes should to be recorded accordingly.

Delegated Authority should be discussed at the Foster Carer's annual reviews.

Any disagreements regarding the Delegation of Authority should be considered by the Independent Reviewing Officer or, if matters cannot be resolved at the review, in consultation with the relevant Social Care Service Managers.

Delegated Policy

Guidance on Key Areas for Consent

As previously stated, parent(s) must agree to authority being delegated, unless there is a Care Order in place and the local Authority considers it necessary to limit the parent's exercise of their parental responsibility in the interests of the child's welfare.

HEALTH CARE

Foster carers should be absolutely clear from the outset about their responsibilities if children require emergency medical treatment and/or if they require planned treatment. The child's health plan will set out the details of the child's health needs and how these will be met. The Placement Plan should clearly demonstrate where the foster carer has delegated authority to take decisions or give consent in relation to a child's health. The Placement Plan can be used by the foster carer as evidence of their delegated authority should they need to present this to a Health professional. The Placement Plan must be agreed and signed at the Placement Planning meeting

Routine medicals

Foster carers should be able to sign consent for routine medicals, eg school or looked-after Children's medicals, whenever possible. They should inform the child's social worker of the outcome.

Immunisations

Foster carers should be given delegated authority, whenever possible, to consent to immunisations. Parents may have concerns about particular immunisations, and this should be explored with them at the beginning of the placement.

Non routine medical treatment

Children should never have to wait for pain relief or emergency treatment as a result of confusion about who has authority to give consent. Situations may arise where children will sustain an injury or require emergency treatment, for example because they have appendicitis or a broken bone. The Placement Plan should be clear about who can give consent to treatment in these situations so as to avoid situations requiring contact with the local authority's out-of-hours service or an officer from the local authority having to attend hospital to sign a consent form. It should be noted, however, that even where authority has not been delegated, foster carers can do what is reasonable in an emergency to keep the child safe.

In some cases children may require invasive medical procedures. These may be planned, or unplanned but predictable, for example if a child has a long standing medical condition that results in frequent unplanned surgery. In other cases, invasive intervention may be required in an emergency. Foster carers should not automatically be barred from consenting to such procedures. Delegated authority should be discussed at the outset of the placement and the Placement Plan should make clear what has been delegated.

Opticians

Foster carers should be able to sign consent for routine eye and sight tests and the provision of glasses.

Dentists

Foster carers should be able to consent to routine examinations wherever possible. Any dental treatment which might be considered 'invasive' e.g. requiring anaesthetic etc would require consent from a parent if the child is S20 accommodated, or from a social worker if the child is subject to a legal order.

Delegated Policy

EDUCATION

School day trips

Risk assessments for school trips and outings are the responsibility of schools. Foster carers should be able to provide agreements and signatures for these from the outset of a placement. Where this is not delegated the reasons should be made clear.

Longer school trips/trips involving more hazardous activity

Longer school trips at home or abroad that require additional funding from the local authority, and trips which involve potentially hazardous activities will require foster carers to consult with social workers. There may also be implications for contact which will need to be resolved. Where consent is necessary from the local authority and/or the parents it is important to ask for this as soon as possible in order to avoid the child missing out. The LA should operate on the general presumption that unless the child is likely to be put at a particular risk of harm which cannot be mitigated or the trip is prohibitively expensive he or she should be allowed to go.

Choosing a school

The choice of an early years setting or school should be discussed and agreed by those who hold parental responsibility at the statutory review meeting. The foster carers should then be able to accept the place and sign any relevant forms.

Change of school

If the foster carer decides to move house or wants the child to attend a different school, this will need to be agreed at a review meeting. The impact on the child should be a significant factor in this discussion. If the move is agreed the foster carer should be able to complete the practical steps to implement the agreed actions.

Meeting with school staff

In a medium to long-term placement, the foster carer should usually be the person to meet school staff to discuss progress and share information that the school needs to know to help the child succeed. Between reviews the foster carer should ensure that the social worker and, if appropriate, the parent is kept informed about the child's progress at school particularly if there are any problems.

Accessing educational and leisure activities

Looked-after children should have the same opportunities as any child to take full advantage of extra-curricular education initiatives. Foster carers should be delegated the task of providing agreements and signatures for these from the outset of a placement, wherever possible. This information is recorded in the child's Personal Education Plan. Regulations refer to foster carers facilitating the role of a 'pushy parent' in order to ensure a child's educational needs are met. This means there is an expectation of on Foster Carers to proactively ensure appropriate education for the child in their care.

Sports activities/organisations

All children who go to school will participate in physical education – this does not require consent. Foster carers should be able to give consent to children participating in extra-curricular sports activities and activities such as scouts or guides. Delegated authority to give such consent should be discussed at the start of the placement and the outcome recorded in the Placement Plan.

Delegated Policy

LEISURE AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN FOSTER CARE

Overnight stays

The Government's intention is that foster carers should be able to make decisions about overnight stays as if the fostered child was their own child and act as a protective parent would; whilst also allowing young people to learn from appropriately managed risk taking and the consequences of their own decisions. This refers to immediate overnight stays – stays of a longer duration should be discussed with the supporting social worker in advance.

The authority delegated to the foster carer to make decisions about overnight stays should be set out in the Placement Plan, along with any restrictions on overnight stays that may be necessary in exceptional circumstances. Volume 2, chapter 3, of the Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance covers this matter in the section Shared Responsibilities and Consents.

In making decisions about whether or not to permit a Looked After Child to stay overnight with a friend, or have a holiday with their friends, or with relatives of their Foster Carers', or to go on a school trip, Foster Carers and the Local Authority should consider the following factors:

- The wishes and feelings of the child/young person
- Whether there are any restrictions in the Care Plan/Placement Plan
- Whether there are any restricting Court Orders
- Whether there are any factors in the child's past experiences or behaviour which could preclude the overnight stay, visit or holiday.
- Whether there are any grounds for concern that the child may be at risk in the household, or from the activities proposed.
- The age and level of understanding of the child/young person.
- The length of the stay and the reasons for it.

If in any doubt about any appropriate decision, the Foster Carer should consult the Social Worker or Supervising Social worker for advice, guidance and support.

When Children who are Looked After are visiting, staying overnight or spending holidays with the Foster Carers' friends or relatives consideration should be given regarding as to whether there is any requirement that the individual should be approved as a Foster Carer.

- During a fostering assessment, the Fostering Service will have undertaken DBS checks on those people in the applicant's support network including people who will be frequently involved with the child.
- Once the DBS documentation has been received and during the Placement Planning Meeting discussions should take place regarding each fostered child to consider whether and at what stage decisions can be delegated to the Carer to allow the child to visit or stay with any of the named and DBS checked members in the foster carer's network.

Delegated Policy

Foster Carers and the Local Authority should consider the following:

- The legal basis of the placement must be considered, in that if the placement is under Section 20 the parent/ person with Parental Responsibility must either give consent or agree to delegate consent to the foster parent.
- The child's wishes and feelings must always be central to the decision making and the age and level of understanding of the child concerned must be taken into account.
- The length of stay
- The reasons for the holiday/visit/overnight stay.

NB: if the Placement Plan includes regular and sustained respite to be provided by a friend/relative of the Carer, in order to sustain and support the placement, this will be seen as 'shared care' and as such the Respite Carer must be considered for a full form F assessment and fully approved as a Foster Carer.

Visiting friends

As with overnight stays, the statutory guidance concerning visiting friends is clear:

- Unless there is a reason for not delegating authority, the foster carer should be authorised to act as a good parent in decisions regarding visits to friends.

Holidays in the UK

Most holidays will require discussion with the parent and consultation with the Local Authority for funding and implications for contact arrangements.

- The Local Authority and birth parents must know the whereabouts of children at all times.
- Foster carers should ensure that the local authority is given adequate notice of the intention to take a child on holiday.
- Foster Carers should only take school age children on holiday in the school holiday periods.

Holidays abroad

The possibility of children accompanying their foster carers on a family holiday abroad should be discussed with parents 'in principle' when they first become looked after. The parents' views and concerns should be known at the outset. In all cases, there should be clarity about consent, passports so that arrangements can allow for short notice and the foster carers can take advantage of a cheap holiday deal or a trip at short notice for personal reasons, whilst ensuring that school age children only go on holiday during school holiday periods.

Consent and passports are also relevant in the case of school trips abroad.

Haircuts

This is often not straightforward and can be a fraught area for foster carers and children. It is an important issue which can require sensitive attention, as hair care and style may have cultural or religious significance for families. Decisions about the timing of and arrangements for haircuts should be delegated to those with whom the child lives, wherever possible. However, the issues need to be fully explored with parents at the outset. Arrangements should be agreed at the placement planning meeting and recorded in the Placement Plan and revisited as necessary in reviews.

Delegated Policy

CONTACT

The principles and practice of the contact should be established and formalised in the Placement Plan and the review is the place for agreeing any changes. It may be possible for foster carers, particularly in well-established placements, to undertake a degree of decision-making in respect of some contact arrangements if the parameters for this are clear and agreed beforehand. Any task that involves foster carers in supervising contact or facilitating contact in the home requires that the foster carers have received adequate training for these tasks and that the necessary risk assessments have been undertaken.

OTHER AREAS

Photographs and other media activity

There should be no restrictions on foster carers taking family pictures of their fostered child or the child and their friends. The foster carer does not need consent for this. It is important that fostered children have a record and memories of their childhood and photographs can be a helpful way for fostered children to make sense of their history.

Decisions on whether the foster carer can consent to other types of photographs or media activity can be more problematic as issues of confidentiality and safeguarding can be significant. The issue of the age and competency of a young person to make informed decisions has also to be taken into account. It should be assumed that young people over 16 would take the 'lead' in these decisions.

School photographs – Foster carers should be enabled to give consent for formal school photographs. They should be encouraged to ensure children have school and group photographs taken as part of their life history.

Other types of photographs/wider media activity – many children love to be able to take part in activities that may lead to publicity in the media. Others may wish to engage in paid or voluntary activities which drive improvements in foster care and that may attract media attention. While this should be encouraged and celebrated, the issues of 'who consents', needs to be considered in relation to any specific known risks regarding the safety of each individual child. Young people and foster carers will appreciate that individual consideration of each case is vital. When there are restrictions on a child's photograph or name appearing in the media this should be based on sound explanations and clearly detailed in the Placement Plan.

Participating in hazardous activities

Once again, early anticipation and discussion of these types of situations can save later distress and disappointment. Views will vary on what activities are considered 'hazardous' or 'risky'. The Government expects that a risk-averse culture in respect of looked after children will be challenged and it requires foster carers to be able to act more often as 'any good parent would'. However prior consultation with parents and collaboration over these types of decisions is usually necessary and it is important that foster carers work within the local authority's policies in relation to any restrictions on certain activities and in ensuring any necessary insurance is in place. If authorised to take decisions for a range of anticipated activities that may cause injury for example, skating, riding, sailing, wall climbing or karting the foster carer would need to ensure that the child or young person had the correct safety equipment, adequate preparation and, where applicable, was supervised by a recognised instructor or supervising organisation.

Any requests to participate in potentially dangerous activities should be discussed at a review meeting and a decision on delegated authority agreed.

Delegated Policy

Sex education

Children will receive education about sex and relationships at school, unless parents have decided to withdraw their children from such lessons. A child's participation in the school's provision for sex and relationship education should be discussed at the Placement Planning meeting and the parents' wishes recorded. If it has been agreed beforehand that the child will attend the foster carer should be able to consent on any school documentation. There will also be occasions when issues around sex and relationships arise in the foster home. Unless parents have expressed specific wishes about what they want their child to be told and how, foster carers should respond as any reasonable parent would.

Mobile telephones

As a general principle foster carers with young people in long-term placements should be responsible for making decisions regarding the possession and use of mobile phones. Any restrictions should be specified at the time of placement or discussed in reviews. Some parents may need help to understand that foster carers, who are caring for other children in the household, need to be able to operate as consistently as possible with all the children. Foster carers need to appreciate that phones can be vital links with friends and relatives who are important to the child and that their use will need to be negotiated. Foster carers and social workers may wish to refer to the Fostering Network Pathways Through Fostering book Safer Caring, or to check other resources available from www.fostering.net or www.ceop.police.uk on this topic.

Disability Living Allowance

If a claim for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is made for a child under 16, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to appoint a person to receive and deal with the allowance on the child's behalf. The Social Worker will complete the appropriate documentation in order for the payment to be made to the foster carer. For most children outside foster care the appointee is usually a parent, but for fostered children the appointee is usually their foster carer. The parents' or local authority's agreement to this is not required. It is the appointee's responsibility to use the DLA to support the child. DLA is not intended to be saved in its entirety, but any unused DLA can be saved and put towards future needs.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for monitoring the award. There is no requirement to keep receipts or records of expenditure, and the child's local authority and fostering service are not responsible for monitoring the award. However, the DWP can be asked to investigate if there are concerns that the DLA award is not being used appropriately.

See the BMBC guidance for foster carers on DLA applications.

Body piercings

Discussion in regard to body piercings should take place between the social workers, parents and foster carers before the request arises.

In long-term placements of older children, the judgement of the foster carers should generally prevail. Foster carers should be able to consider the arguments for and against giving permission and be confident to make decisions which do not accord with the child's wishes (if appropriate). In general, a young person should understand the health and aesthetic implications of piercing. There will be circumstances when social workers, foster carers or parents disagree, but have to accept that the young person is of an age to make such a decision themselves.

The law in relation to piercings should be adhered to at all times.

Delegated Policy

AREAS WHERE FOSTER CARERS CANNOT LEGALLY GIVE CONSENT

Religion

A child in the care of the local authority cannot be brought up in a religion that is different to the one they would have otherwise been brought up in. This does not mean that, where necessary, a child cannot be placed with a foster family of a different faith, if this family is appropriate to meet the child's wider needs. However, it does mean that the foster carers cannot actively seek to persuade the child to change their religion. If a fostered child is considering changing their religion, even if they are over 16, foster carers should seek advice and guidance about how they respond to this. Full consideration in a review needs to be given to the long-term implications for the child of departing from the faith of the family of origin.

Taking the child abroad

Even with a passport, a fostered child cannot be taken abroad without the written consent of someone with parental responsibility.

Passports

Young people can apply for an adult passport at age 16. Applications for passports for younger children can only be signed by a holder of parental responsibility – the parent or, if a care order is in place, an officer of the local authority. This does not prevent foster carers being authorised to undertake some of the preparation of the application form or, if necessary, collecting passports (with a letter of consent from the signatory) from regional passport offices. Passports can be a problem when carers want to take children on holiday. It is, therefore, essential that the placement planning meeting or first review considers arrangements for a passport application so this process is started as early as possible. For more information and guidance on this topic visit www.ips.gov.uk/cps/files/ips/live/assets/documents/Guidance_notes_v_8.pdf

Tattoos

UK law is clear: 18 is the minimum age for a person to have a tattoo. The issue of parental consent, therefore, does not arise.

Conclusion

Delegated Authority aims to ensure that the Service and the Carer(s) and birth parents develop a good working relationship which allows the Carer to have a maximum amount of delegation in relation to day to day decisions, including allowing children and young people to visit, stay overnight, go on holiday etc.

If in exceptional circumstances where there have been issues leading the Service to have concern about the appropriateness of such delegation or there is evidence that the Carer has used the delegation inappropriately then more limited decision-making will have to be applied.

In every case of a child or young person coming into the care of the Local Authority a Placement Planning Meeting for each child must be convened which will need to agree specific delegations. Decisions reached will take account of the above general guidance:

- The knowledge, skills and abilities of the carer.
- The carers' history with the Service
- The wishes and feelings of the child and any additional special needs
- The type of placement (legal status of placement ie short or long term)
- Particular vulnerability/resilience of the child

As in most families, the expectation is that these decisions are made with the child at the centre of the decision making process, and are in their best interests, therefore it is expected that children have continuity of care within a small extended family network.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT PROCEDURE

Procedure Regarding the Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

Background

There are three pieces of legislation and guidance which underpin the policy on supervision and support for foster carers.

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Support, training and information for foster parents [reg.17]

The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support (including support in out-of-hours) as appears in the interests of children placed with them [reg17(1)].

The National Minimum Standard

Standard 21 Supervision and support of foster carers

Underpinning legislation – Regulation 17 – Support, training and information for foster parents

Outcome – Foster carers receive the support and supervision they need in order to care properly for children placed with them.

21.6 All foster carers have access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice, to enable them to provide consistent, high quality care to the child. This includes assistance with dealing with relevant services, such as health and education. Consideration is given to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers.

21.7 The role of the supervising social worker is clear to the worker and the foster carer.

21.8 Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year. Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's 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 own competencies and skills. The frequency of meetings for short breaks carers should be proportionate to the amount of care provided. Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care

Standard 7

7.3 USING SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION TO DEVELOP YOUR ROLE

7.3 a Understand the purpose of your personal supervision and annual foster carer review and know how to make the best use of these opportunities.

The above sets the background for supervision and support.

Supervision Policy

The sections below set out how this will work in practice

1. Purpose

1.1 Procedure to ensure that foster carers are fully supervised and supported to undertake the care of children and young people placed with them.

1.2 Foster carers undertake one of the most important and complex roles, in partnership with others involved with children placed with them, in ensuring children in care receive appropriate care and protection. The authority has a responsibility to provide a support and supervision framework which enables carers to assume this role. This procedure outlines the tasks and responsibilities of Social Care staff in providing this.

2. Scope

This procedure relates to all those involved with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council foster carers and the children and young people placed with them.

3. References

- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- National Minimum Care Standards for Fostering
- National Foster Care Standards

4. Definitions

4.1 A foster carer as referred to in this procedure is a person or persons who have been approved by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to act as a carer for children in care.

4.2 The Supervising Social Worker as referred to here is the named social worker from the fostering team who has direct responsibility for the support and supervision of carers he or she has been allocated to work with.

5. Action

5.1 Within one week of approval, the Team Manager, Fostering, will allocate all foster carers a named Supervising Social Worker from the Fostering Team. It is this worker's responsibility to ensure that children cared for by foster carers on behalf of the Authority are afforded safety, protection and appropriate care. They are responsible for providing professional support and supervision to foster carers and their families to enable them to undertake the care of children and young people placed with them, in line with departmental procedures, The Fostering

Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Care Standards.

(**Person responsible**) Team Manager, Fostering Supervising Social Worker

Supervision Policy

5.2 The Supervising Social Worker will visit the carer as soon as possible after approval but within two weeks, in order to discuss and sign the foster care agreement. At this visit, the Supervising Social Worker will also provide the carer with a copy of the carer's handbook, the annual foster carer training programme, dates and venues for support groups, and any additional reading material which may be necessary / helpful.

5.3 The Supervising Social Worker should ensure that within 12 weeks of approval, action has been taken to implement the carer's professional development plan as detailed in the Form F assessment report, and that a plan has been written about how the carer will achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care within 12 months of approval.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker

5.4 Post approval, the Supervising Social Worker should regularly provide the foster carer with updates on policy, procedure and guidance for the handbook, updates on payments, foster carer newsletters and updates on training opportunities. The Supervising Social Worker should visit the carer within one week of any new placement being made. On the placement of a child, the supervising social worker should ensure that the carer has all the information, understanding, equipment and training to care appropriately for that child.

(See appendix 1. Supervising Social Worker Responsibilities)

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker

5.5 Supervising social workers will draw up and agree a supervision contract with each of the foster carers they are responsible for. This should be an individualised contract tailored to the carer's needs, but should follow the contract template (see appendix 2) and be consistent with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011.

The supervision contract should be reviewed at least annually through the carer's annual review and in between times if either the carer or Supervising Social Worker feels amendments are needed.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker/ Foster Carer

5.6 Supervising Social Workers will make contact with foster carers at least monthly. This contact may be a telephone contact or a home visit. There is a general expectation that in most cases workers will make a home visit every four to six weeks. For some carers and in some circumstances the frequency of visits may have to be increased to fortnightly or weekly visits. There may be other carers, for example, those who have long term placements which are and have been stable for some time, where it may be appropriate to make home visits on a three monthly basis. Visiting frequency should be discussed and agreed in the supervision contract and through the carer annual review process. Supervising Social Workers will make one unannounced visit each year.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Workers

5.7 The Supervising Social Worker for the carer is responsible for ensuring that the carer's review is completed within twelve months of the previous review, or sooner if specifically required. Having agreed a date for the review with the reviewing officer and carers, the Supervising Social Worker will:-

- Send consultation forms to foster carers, carers own children and social workers of children placed since last review.
- Ensure that the foster carer file is up to date and available to the reviewing officer five days before the review meeting.

Supervision Policy

- Complete the relevant parts of the review forms
- Support the carers in preparation for the review

Share the reports for the review with the carer before the meeting.

Refer to separate Foster Carer Review Procedure

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Workers

5.8 The effect of fostering on the carer's own children can be crucial to the short and long term success of a placement. The position of the carer's own children must be discussed at each supervisory visit, and any plans to address difficulties should be agreed and recorded on the carer supervision record form.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Workers

5.9 The need for Supervising Social Workers to work with carer's own children should be negotiated between the supervising social worker and carer according to a child's particular needs.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker/ Foster Carer

5.10 The position of carer's own children should be Supervising Social discussed at each annual review, as well as and any plans to resolve any related difficulties. Attendance by the carer's own children at the review meeting should always be considered.

The fostering team will arrange and facilitate monthly support groups for foster carers. Supervising Social Workers will encourage carers to attend, and reasonable assistance will be provided where necessary (e.g. transport).

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Workers

5.11 Carers are encouraged to use the support of other carers, and the department will attempt to link new with more experienced carers. It is an expectation that carers receiving higher levels of payment will provide support to other carers. Where possible training will be given to enable carers to provide this support confidently and to ensure consistency and boundaries. Supervising Social Workers should link their carer up with more experienced carers who can act as mentors, particularly where this would be beneficial in relation to support for achieving the TSDS standards.

At the end of Skills to Foster courses participants should be given the opportunity to share their contact numbers / addresses with other participants, to develop informal support networks from the start.

(Person responsible) Foster Carers Supervising Social Worker Training Facilitators

6. Documentation

Appendix 1: THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER

Supervision Policy

Appendix 1

THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER

1. Introduction

The role of the supervising social worker is:

- To provide professional supervision of foster carers to ensure that their practice is safe and meets the needs of fostered children
- To support foster carers and help them to develop the skills and knowledge needed to foster
- To encourage learning and personal development of foster carers including attendance at relevant training
- To support foster carers in meeting the needs of sons and daughters who foster

2. Supervisory visits

- The supervising social worker will be responsible for agreeing a supervision contract with the foster carer.
- The supervising social worker will make regular visits in line with the supervision contract. Usually this will be monthly and it will not be less than twelve weekly.
- Visits will be more frequent for newly approved foster carers, in the early stages of any placement or when particular difficulties are being experienced.
- There will be at least one unannounced visit each year.
- All adults and children in the foster household should be seen at least once a year.
- Where foster carers ask for an urgent visit from their supervising social worker, the aim should be to do this, where practicable, within 48 hours.
- Foster carers will also have contact with supervising social workers in office visits, by phone, at children's reviews and support group meetings.

Content of supervision sessions

- The supervisory visit has a format provided by the supervisory visit form which is completed electronically by the Supervising Social Worker.
- An agenda should be agreed at the beginning of each session. It is expected that both parties prepare for the meeting.

Supervision Policy

- At each supervision meeting there should be a check that anything agreed at the previous meeting has been acted upon.
- Supervision should cover the areas set out in the supervisory visit form, and address the competencies needed for foster care.

a. Caring for Children

- Check that the foster carers have enough information to care effectively for children.
- Consider with the foster carer how they are promoting healthy emotional, physical and sexual development as well as health and educational achievement.
- Look at contact plans and issue of working closely with children's families.
- Discuss the management of children's behaviour and ensure that foster carers have appropriate strategies to do this, without the use of inappropriate sanctions or punishment.
- Check that foster carers have a knowledge of normal child development and are able to communicate with children appropriately.
- Consider how the foster carer helps the child to have a voice about the things that matter to them in their day to day life.
- Consider how foster carers are using their allowance to care for children and ensure that children have appropriate pocket money, equipment and clothing.
- Look at how the carer promotes the skills which children and young people need as preparation for the transition to independence.

b. Providing a safe and caring environment

- Ensure that statutory checks remain up to date for household members.
- Ensure that the home remains safe in all aspects.
- Agree strategies and plans for working with fostered children about remaining safe from harm and abuse.
- Ensure that all members of the fostering household understand what is meant by 'safer caring' and practice accordingly.
- Regularly check written foster carer records and sign them off.

c. Working as part of a team

- Provide feedback from other professionals and discuss issues of working together.
- Look at how best to communicate issues generally and specifically in order to achieve positive outcomes.
- Consider issues of confidentiality and what this means in practice.
- Address issues of promoting equality and diversity generally and in specific cases.
- Identify any support that foster carers might need in order to provide a good standard of care.

d. Own development

- Provide constructive feedback about foster carers' performance. If there has been any criticism of how foster carers have been carrying out their role, this should be shared and discussed.
- Allow for reflection on feelings and experiences.
- Look at meeting the needs of children who foster.
- Discussion about support networks and how to utilise these effectively.
- Discussion of training opportunities and planning for carers to attend training.
- Discussion of TSDS requirements and induction process.
- Acknowledgement of the stressful impact of working with children who have been abused and neglected; and consideration about how to manage this, including potential need for additional resources and service

TRAINING FOR FOSTER CARERS

Find out more about upcoming training on our website at www.barnsley.gov.uk/training-for-foster-carers/

Review Procedure

- If the service provider does not receive any representations and the foster parent does not apply to the IRM within 28 days it may proceed to make its decision [reg.28(9)]. There is no provision for shortening this period, even if the foster parent has consented to a variation in their terms of approval.

If the service provider does receive any written representation within 28 days, it must:

- refer the case to the fostering panel for its consideration and
- make its decision, taking into account any recommendation made by the panel [reg.28.(10)].

If the foster parent applies to the IRM within 28 days, the FSP must make its decision, taking into account the recommendation of the fostering panel and the independent review panel [reg.28(11)].

As soon as practicable after making its final decision as described above, the foster service provider must write to the foster parent stating:

- the foster parent and her/his household continue to be suitable, and the terms of the approval continue to be appropriate or
- her/his approval is terminated from a specified date, and the reasons for this termination or
- the revised terms of the approval and the reasons for this revision [reg.28(13)].

A foster parent may give notice in writing to the FSP at any time that she/he no longer wishes to be a foster parent, whereupon her/his approval is terminated with effect from 28 days from the date on which the notice is received by the FSP [reg.28(13)].

A copy of any notice given under this regulation shall be sent to the responsible authority for any child placed with the foster parent (unless the responsible authority is also the FSP) and to the area authority [reg.28(14)].

A copy of the notice must also be sent to the Secretary of State in any case where the IRM has made a recommendation [reg.28(15)].

The National Minimum Standards

Standard 13 recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children

Underpinning legislation – Regulation 28 – Reviews and terminations of approval

Outcome – The fostering service recruit, assesses and supports a range of foster carers to meet the needs of the children they provide care for and is proactive in assessing current and future needs of children.

-13.8 Reviews of foster carers' approval are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy itself about their carers' ongoing suitability to foster.

-13.9 Areas of concern, or need for additional support, that are identified between reviews are addressed. Such matters identified between reviews are addressed at the time they are identified, where appropriate, rather than waiting for a review.

The above sets the background for the annual review of foster carers.

Review Procedure

The section below sets out how this works in practice.

1. Purpose

1.1 The procedure sets out the requirements and the process for the review of foster carers approved by the local authority in Barnsley.

2. Scope

2.1 This procedure relates to all foster carers formally approved by the local authority in Barnsley. This includes both mainstream foster carers approved to care for children previously unknown to them, and family and friends foster carers specifically approved to care for a named child.

2.2 This procedure does not relate to private foster carers. Private foster carers are not formally approved by the local authority and ongoing reviews of the suitability of these arrangements are dealt with separately.

3. References

3.1 Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011.

3.2 National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

4. Definitions

4.1 None

5. Action

5.1 Following initial approval as foster carers via the Local Authority's fostering panel and the Agency Decision Maker, all approved carers must have their approval reviewed not more than a year later, and thereafter whenever the Fostering Service consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year. (In practice, foster carers will find that their first annual review is held about 9 or 10 months after their initial approval, with the intention of presenting their review back to the fostering panel a year after approval. Subsequent annual reviews will be booked in 10 or 11 months after the review.)
(Person responsible) Team Manager Fostering

5.2 Following initial approval, the Fostering Team Manager shall ensure that a review is booked onto the review panel. (In practice, as noted above, this will be 9 or 10 months after initial approval.)
(Person responsible) Team Manager Fostering

5.3 The review is booked onto the review panel by the Business Support Officer. The business Support Officer will alert the supervising social worker and the team manager that a review is due 40 working days before the review panel date.
(Person responsible) Business Support Officer

Review Procedure

5.4 When alerted by the Business Support Officer of a carer review due, the Supervising Social Worker is to contact the named foster carer to confirm availability for the review.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker, Business Support Officer

5.5 The Supervising Social Worker must complete the foster carer review report. BMBC is committed to a “digital Barnsley” and the Business Support Officer will send via e-mail, 35 days before the review to foster carer(s). The foster carer review reports to be completed and returned by foster carers 25 days before the review date. These will be sent making use of secure systems used by BMBC. Supervising Social Workers will promote, support encourage the completion of consultation documents to:

- the foster carer
- the foster carers birth children
- children fostered during the review period
- Social workers of children fostered in the review period

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker, Business Support Officer

5.6 The report must be completed in advance and sent to the carer in advance in order to allow adequate time for the carer to consider the report contents and the recommendations. It is also essential that the checks (namely the DBS checks –every 3 years and the medical checks – every 2 years) are also up to date.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker, Team Manager Fostering

5.7 In advance of the meeting the Supervising Social Worker must also update the Health and Safety Check list and the Safer Caring Policy with the foster family.

(Person responsible) Supervising Social Worker

5.8 The Review Chair will have a copy of the reports, health and safety check and safer caring policy, consultation document and any other appropriate documents in advance of the review meeting. These will be sent electronically, using a secure system used by BMBC.

(Person responsible) Business Support Officer, Supervising Social Worker, Team Manager Fostering

5.9 At the time of the review meeting the Review Chair will chair proceedings, ensuring that all the key issues noted in the report, consultation, health and safety check and safer caring policy are covered adequately. Reviews for foster carers are conducted in the office.

(Person responsible) Review Chair

5.10 The review chair should enable the carer to fully participate in the meeting throughout before bringing the meeting to a conclusion by making the key recommendations.

(Person responsible) Review Chair

5.11 The key recommendations must cover:

- a) Whether the foster carer should continue to be approved and what the category of approval should be.
- b) Training and development needs including progress towards completion of TSDS training and development standards for foster carers. Recommendations here should inform the carer's personal professional development plan.
- c) The foster family support and supervision needs.
- d) The carers status in relation to Skills Based Fee payments

Review Procedure

e) Health and safety improvements needed if any.

(Person responsible) Review Chair, Fostering Team Manager, Supervising Social Worker

5.13 Following the review meeting the review chair should write up the review chairs summary and recommendation section of the report and send this to the foster carer and the Supervising Social Worker with 28 days.

(Person responsible) Business Support Officer, Review Chair

5.14 The review report must be referred by the review chair to the fostering panel for its consideration in the following circumstances:

- Where this is the first review following initial approval
- Every three years thereafter
- Following significant allegations against a carer
- If the review recommends that the foster carer is no longer suitable.
- If the review recommends amendments to the carers category of approval
- And where for any other reason the service considers it necessary for the panel to consider the review.

(Person responsible) Review Chair, Fostering Team Manager, Supervising Social Worker

5.15 Where a review is considered by the panel the process follows that set out in the Fostering Panel Procedure.

6. Documentation

6.1 Foster carer Review Template

6.2 Health and Safety Checklist

6.3 Safer Caring Policy Template

Procedure and Guidance

Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers

1. Purpose

1.1 Any allegation made by a child must be taken seriously and investigated. However foster carers are, more than any other member of the child care team, at risk of being the subject of false allegations and this can be extremely traumatic for them and their families. In order to safeguard carers the assessment process will have explored their ability to provide safe care to vulnerable children and given them tools to maintain safe care. The matching process and placement risk assessment provide further safeguards and the individual carer's safe care plan should be in place. The placement agreement should established day to day care arrangements and identify any potential risk areas. Stability Core Groups should be used regularly to support placements requiring additional support and any increasing risks identified.

1.2 The complaints and allegations procedures seek to ensure that all allegations against foster carers are addressed at an appropriate level while ensuring that foster carers are supported throughout the process.

1.3 The procedures envisage that allegations against foster carers could arise at one of 3 levels either;

- Complaints – a child or parent is unhappy with some aspect of the care offered.

The complaints procedure is not detailed in these procedures but is detailed elsewhere

- Concerns – there are aspects of the care offered by the carers which may fall below the standard expected of foster carers but do not cross the threshold of significant harm.

The first part of these procedures address concerns with the expectation that for the most part these are dealt with directly by the Fostering Service

- Allegations – where the concerns cross the threshold for significant harm and the standard allegation procedures as detailed on the Safeguarding Board web-site will be followed.

2. Scope

2.1 This procedure relates to all foster carers approved by the Local Authority in Barnsley. This includes both mainstream foster carers approved to care for children previously unknown to them and Connected Persons Carers who are specifically approved to care for a named child.

2.2 This procedure does not include foster carers employed by independent fostering agencies although reference is made to the process for an allegation involving an IFA carer.

2.3 This procedure deals with allegations of significant harm by a foster carer regarding a Looked After Child in their care or any other child with whom they have contact.

3. References

- 3.1 Fostering Services (EHC 1) Regulations 2011 etc.
- 3.2 Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011
- 3.3 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 Fostering Services
- 3.4 Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures 2011

4. Definitions

Physical Abuse is a form of significant harm which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse is a form of significant harm which involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse is a form of significant harm which involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Allegations

Neglect is a form of significant harm which involves the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Allegations

5. Actions

	Action	Person Responsible
5.1	<p>Concerns/Allegations falling below the threshold for a child protection Investigation</p> <p>Not all allegations will cross the threshold for child protection investigation under S47 (Children Act 1989). Many will fall below this threshold and will be judged to be allegations of safeguarding conduct which can be investigated internally by the fostering service and the child's social work team.</p>	
5.2	<p>Where concerns have been raised about a foster carer from any source. The Fostering Team Manager and the Children and Families Team Manager should consult with the LADO and agree a plan of investigation. Where necessary, an Evaluation Meeting may be called to consider information-sharing, the process and focus of the investigation. The plan for enquiry will depend on the nature and seriousness of the concern. Careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis as to whether the investigation should be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted by the fostering social worker allocated to supervise the foster carers; Be dealt with by an experienced social worker from the fostering service who is independent of the foster carer; or Be dealt with by a senior social worker or the Fostering Team Manager themselves. <p>The investigation must work in conjunction with the child's social worker who should interview the child. Consideration should be given to the context of the concern, the placement history, and information on the foster carers.</p> <p>Depending on the nature of the concern, the Fostering Team Manager in consultation with the Service Manager will decide whether a report needs to be presented to the Fostering Panel which will trigger a review of the foster carer's approval so that they may make a recommendation about their continued suitability to foster.</p> <p>Any concern which is deemed to be substantiated at outcome or where there are remaining considerations of risk or suitability must be taken to panel.</p> <p>If the decision is that the report should be presented to the Fostering Panel, this should be at the next available Panel. The report and recommendations should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The carers suitability and competence to foster; Matters relevant to the placement of all children currently in the foster carer's household; The placement of other children in the future and any variations in approval; Implications for the registration of the foster carers; Identified training needs and additional support requirements. <p>If an investigation has been made and concluded, the outcome of the investigation should be shared with the foster carer and recorded on the foster carer's file including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of nature and source of allegation/concern; Any other relevant information; Decision reached and reasons for this parties to the decision; If not already aware, how the persons with parental responsibility for the child or children are to be informed. <p>A plan to address any recommendations from the investigation should be put in place, when these will be reviewed, and who by.</p> <p>The Supervising social worker will advise the carers of the outcome of the investigation within 3 working days of its conclusion.</p>	<p>Fostering Team Manager (in most cases the Fostering Support Team Manager) Team Manager for the Child LADO</p> <p>Child's social worker</p> <p>Fostering Team Manager and Service Manager Provider services</p> <p>Fostering Support Worker</p> <p>Fostering Support Worker</p> <p>Fostering Support Worker</p>

Allegations

	Action	Person Responsible
5.3	<p>Allegations Requiring investigation under the Child Protection (S47) Threshold</p> <p>A referral of Child Protection concern will involve allegations which go beyond what would be considered to be a concern regarding possible safeguarding conduct or complaint regarding the care or management of a child in placement, will have crossed the threshold for possible s47 investigation and may constitute a criminal offence in relation to the carer's conduct.</p> <p>The social worker receiving an allegation against a foster carer will immediately inform the Team Manager Fostering as well as their own line manager and the line manager for the team with responsibility for the child if this is different.</p> <p>The Fostering Support Worker will record the allegations on the foster carer's records</p> <p>The Fostering Team Manager will notify the Service Manager, Provider Services, the LADO and the child's Team Manager (if they are not already aware)</p> <p>The LADO & Service Manager will consider the allegations and decide whether child protection enquiries will take place. There must be immediate consideration with regard to whether the behaviour would be a possible criminal offence. If this is the case the Police Child Protection Unit must be informed</p>	<p>Social Worker</p> <p>Fostering Support Worker</p> <p>Fostering Team Manager</p> <p>LADO and Service Manager Provider Services</p>
5.5	Where a decision that the nature of the allegation does not require a section 47 investigation the fostering service will take appropriate action as at 5.2 within 3 working days.	Fostering Team Manager and Fostering Support Worker
5.6	Where a decision is made at 5.5 above to undertake a child protection investigation. OFSTED must be notified of a child protection allegation against a foster carer. OFSTED will be contacted by the Fostering Team Manager. CURRENT ADVICE FROM OFSTED IS THAT THIS IS NOT REQUIRED.	Fostering Team Manager
5.8	No further placements should be made from the time the allegations are received until the investigation is completed, and the Team Manager Fostering will ensure that the Emergency Duty Team is aware of the position.	Fostering Team Manager
5.9	<p>The carers will be informed immediately of the decision to undertake an investigation unless doing so would put the investigation in jeopardy.</p> <p>Any decision not to inform the carers must be made by the Service Manager Provider Services.</p>	<p>Fostering Support Worker</p> <p>Service Manager Provider Services</p>
5.10	<p>The Initial Strategy Discussion Meeting</p> <p>Where the information indicates that a BMBC Foster Carer has harmed or presents a risk of harm to a child the Children and Families Team Manager from the team where the child is allocated will ensure that an Initial Strategy Discussion takes place within 24 hours. If emergency action is required immediately, the Strategy Discussion should be convened as soon as possible. The purpose of the Strategy Discussion is to consider the concern or allegation and plan any subsequent enquiries and/or protective action. The Initial Strategy Discussion should involve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or nominee • The LADO will chair the Strategy Discussion • The supervising social worker for the foster carer and fostering Team Manager; • The child's social worker and the team leader; (If not chairing.) • The social worker of any other child placed in the household; 	<p>Children's Team Manager</p> <p>LADO LADO Fostering Support Worker and Fostering Team Manager Child's Social Worker Social Worker for any other children</p>

Allegations

	Action	Person Responsible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative from the Police Safeguarding Division in the area where the foster carer is normally resident. • Any other relevant person such as medical or education officers. • The IRO. <p>In addition to planning enquiries in accordance with strategy discussion procedures the meeting should consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allegation and its context; • The background, including any other previous allegations made against the carer(s) or their family; • The background of the alleged victim, including any previous allegations; • Any proposed new placements with the carer will not be made pending the outcome of the enquiry; • Removal of child(ren) should not be an automatic course of action – the decision making should be in the context of the best interests of the child(ren) and the information available, balanced against presenting risks. Any decision to remove a child should be agreed by the Child's Service Manager. Consideration should be given and plans made for how "goodbyes" and contact arrangements are to be managed in the event of removal; • Other children currently living in the carer's household, including the foster carers own child, and those and those previously placed with the carers (including the need for strategy discussions with regard to any of these children) and what information to be given; • Any other children the carer may have contact with in other roles e.g. as a child minder or youth worker; • The recognition of the carers' status, as co-workers and individuals who have a right to be heard; • Who will inform the parents/carers of the allegation and provide information and the timing of such actions • The support and information to be provided to the child(ren) in the placement, including the carer's children e.g. use of advocates; the role of the supervising social worker and the fostering team and alternative sources of support. All parties need to understand that the focus for the supervising social worker is the child and that (s)he will be unable to provide unconditional support to the carer • The continuation of payments to carers; • Consideration of what support should be provided for the foster carers during this process. <p>The meeting may decide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there is insufficient information available on which to proceed and that further enquiries need to be made in order to determine what further action is required; who will undertake the enquiries and when they should be completed; • That the allegation/concern is not substantiated and no further action will be taken in relation to the referral; • No further child protection action will be undertaken; however the concerns remain a safeguarding allegation and will be investigated in line with Section 5.2 above as an allegation which falls within internal fostering investigation process; • That a Child Protection Investigation should be undertaken. This will be managed in accordance with the BMBC Safeguarding Procedures. A police officer and a social worker will investigate the allegation and report back to the Strategy Discussion meeting. The investigating social worker, together with a fostering supervising social worker or senior practitioner, will carry out an assessment of the foster family, paying attention to the risks to, and needs of the family, including children who have significant contact with the carers. 	<p>Police representative</p> <p>Any relevant education or Health staff IRO</p>

Allegations

	Action	Person Responsible
	<p>During the course of the investigation carers have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details concerning the nature of the allegations (timing will be dependent upon the police and Specialist Children's Services investigation); • Contact details for the relevant managers; • A copy of the procedures being followed; • A written statement about existing placements; • A written statement about financial arrangements; • Make a written statement to the fostering team (this may be disclosable in a criminal trial); • Foster Carer diary records should be made available to the investigation; • An indication of the timescale for the investigation; • Details of independent support and how this may be accessed; • Details in writing of all decisions made and actions taken; • The strategy meeting must identify those responsible for these actions and the relevant timescales. If evidence has been gathered at this point that relevant conduct has taken place then the LADO will advise referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and consideration will be given as to who is best placed to make this referral. 	
5.11	<p>Outcome Strategy Discussion</p> <p>A strategy discussion must be held at the conclusion of an enquiry to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all information is shared; • Confirm all actions agreed in previous strategy discussion(s) have been completed; • Agree the conclusion of the enquiry: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alleged abuse has taken place (papers may or may not be forwarded to the CPS); 2. That the investigation is not being further pursued under S47, but the investigation requires completion by the fostering agency; 3. That alleged abuse has not been proven but concerns remain (may be standards of care issues that need to be addressed); 4. That the allegation was not founded; • Ascertain whether Children in Care will remain, or return to the placement; • Identify whether and how to protect any children in the home, including whether an initial child protection conference is required in respect of the foster carers own children; • Consider counselling/therapeutic needs of those affected; • Identify who will inform the carers of the outcome of the investigation against them, what they will be told, including any further actions outstanding. <p>The outcome meeting should be chaired by the LADO.</p> <p>The concluding record of the strategy discussion must be authorised by the LADO and placed on both the child(ren)'s and carers' files, and within 2 weeks of the meeting.</p> <p>This record should be sent to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Manager Provider Services • Service Manager for the child. <p>Where evidence indicates significant concerns about suitability towards continued work with children, the LADO will advise referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and consideration will be given as to who is best placed to make this.</p>	

Allegations

	Action	Person Responsible
5.12	<p>Role of Fostering Panel</p> <p>The Fostering Services will re-assess the status of the carers within 28 working days of the conclusion of the enquiry.</p> <p>The supervising fostering social worker and/or the investigating social worker (as appropriate to be decided in discussion with the Fostering Team Manager) must present a report to the Fostering Panel for a review of the foster carer's approval following any child protection allegation or serious complaint. Their manager should also attend. The report will address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings of the enquiry; • Whether a report has been forwarded to the CPS; • What, if any, concerns remain; • Feelings and experience of the carer; • Opinion of the supervising social worker; • Any implications for the safer caring agreement; • Training issues; • Any other issues relevant to an annual review; • Other information relevant to the child in placement; • Consideration of suitability and possible referral to vetting/barring scheme (DBS). <p>The report must include an account of the allegations, the investigation and the subsequent recommendations and decisions of the Outcome Strategy Discussion. It will also include information about prior placements, the way these were managed and the circumstances of placement endings, and information about the foster carer's supervision/support and training. The report should include the views of the foster carers regarding the allegation and the ensuing investigation. The report should conclude with the recommendation of the fostering social worker regarding the continued approval of the carer and the terms of approval.</p> <p>Carers can submit their own written comments to be included with the report.</p> <p>Where the Service is recommending termination of approval an exceptional fostering review will be arranged prior to the Panel meeting to confirm the recommendation.</p> <p>The panel must consider the following information prior to drawing its conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review report and recommendations; • Any written submission by the carer(s); • Minutes from any relevant child protection conference; • The record of the concluding strategy discussion. <p>This process provides the carer with the opportunity to reflect on their experience and consider what action they might wish to take. They must be informed of the panel date and information on the complaints and access to files procedures.</p> <p>Being the subject of allegations or serious complaints can be a very stressful experience for foster carers and their families. The Barnsley Fostering Panel will give the foster carers the choice of whether to attend or not, and will respect carers' wishes and feelings about attendance. If there are concerns about the carer's continuing registration following any child protection or complaint investigations, the carer will be notified. The foster carer will then write to the fostering team manager with their decision about whether they wish to attend the Fostering Panel. The carer may decide to bring a family member or colleague carer along for support on the day. Their supervising fostering social worker and his/her supervisor will always attend, regardless of whether the carer wishes to be there or not.</p>	

Allegations

	Action	Person Responsible
	<p>The panel's recommendations are forwarded, via the panel minutes, to the Agency Decision Maker. If the Decision Maker considers that the Foster Carers' Terms of Approval should remain the same, then the carers will be notified. However, if the proposal is to change the carer's terms or to de-register them then the Decision Maker will make a "qualifying determination". The Carer will be sent a letter and a copy of the information leaflet about the Independent Review Mechanism. Within 28 working days of receiving the letter, the carers must either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm to the Decision Maker that they have accepted the determination; or • Request that their case is reconsidered by the Fostering Panel; or • Apply to the Independent Review Mechanism for a review of the case. <p>If the carers choose to have their case reconsidered at the Fostering Panel, they may attend the panel with the worker if they wish.</p> <p>The Panel will make appropriate recommendations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate re-instatement of carer(s), if approval and use for placements has been suspended; • Re-assessment of the carer(s) in relation to the identified concerns; • Carer remaining on hold pending the decision of the CPS; • Concerns are sufficiently serious to warrant termination of approval. <p>Recommendations may include changes to the approval of carers, review and/or training recommendations, implications for the Safe Care Plan, or address specific matters within the foster home.</p> <p>A final recommendation about the carer's registration will be made to the Decision Maker by the Panel.</p> <p>If the carers choose to request a review by the Independent Reviewing Mechanism once the recommendation has been made, this will be reconsidered by the Agency Decision Maker.</p> <p>If concerns were sufficiently serious to warrant termination of approval, or the carer chooses to withdraw because termination of approval is likely, then a referral has to be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service. The Disclosure and Barring Service will consider inclusion of the individual on the relevant barred list(s).</p> <p>A copy of the final outcome will be put on the carer's file.</p> <p>Fostering teams will prioritise presentation of cases where an allegation has been made, and the case will be heard no later than 28 days from the conclusion of the child protection enquiry.</p>	
5.13	<p>Action on conclusion of the investigation and consideration by the Panel</p> <p>The Fostering Team Manager will inform the LADO of the outcome of the allegation including the outcome of the review of the foster carer's approval. If the allegation is substantiated and the person is no longer approved to foster, the LADO will advise on referral to the DBS for consideration of barring and who is best placed to make this referral.</p> <p>On conclusion of an enquiry into allegations against foster carers within these procedures, an Outcome Meeting will be arranged between representatives from the Fostering Service and the carers to review the investigation, the findings and decisions made, and to inform the carers of any further action.</p> <p>The foster carers file must record details of any complaints/allegations and the outcome.</p> <p>The Fostering Team will keep a record of all allegations/complaints against foster carers.</p>	<p>Fostering Team Manager</p> <p>Fostering Support Worker</p> <p>Fostering Support Worker</p>

Allegations

	Action	Person Responsible
5.14	<p>Payment of Fostering Fees and Allowances</p> <p>In recognition of the financial hardship that may be encountered by carers while an allegation or complaint is being investigated, the following protocols apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a child is removed from a Barnsley Metropolitan Council Foster placement, pending the outcome of an investigation, the Allowances and the Skill Based Fee will continue to be paid to the carer for two weeks following the allegation and will then require reconsideration and agreement from Service Manager Provider Services. After two weeks it is unlikely that those particular children would be returning to the placement so the amount paid should drop down to the skill-based fee only. However there may be circumstances where it is still likely that if the allegation is unfounded the children will return and the full payment could continue. The two week extension can continue at the discretion of the Service Manager until the investigation is complete. For carers on skills level below level 3 the level 3 skills level will be paid once the allowance period has ended subject to the same 2 week review until the investigation is complete. When an allegation is made against a carer where there are currently no children in placement, and placements are put on hold this will require consideration from the Service Manager in respect of the payment of the Skill Based Fee only pending the outcome of the investigation. The same principles apply to Respite Carers, who will be paid pro-rata. If the investigation finds that the allegations are not substantiated – skills fees only payments will end and the carers will be available for further placements If the allegations are substantiated skills-only payments will end immediately after the outcome meeting. If the allegations are partially substantiated skills-based payments will continue until the ADM confirms a recommendation regarding whether or not the carers' approval should continue. 	
5.16	<p>The Head of Service Child in Care should be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation.</p> <p>The Head of Service Child in Care will be responsible for briefing the Service Director, the Executive Director and the Chief Executive as appropriate.</p>	<p>Team Manager Fostering</p> <p>Head of Service Children in Care</p>
5.17	<p>Allegations against IFA carers</p> <p>Any allegations against IFA foster carers should be investigated under the Allegations against Persons who work with children, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Safeguarding Children Procedures.</p> <p>Child's social worker and Team Manager to initiate investigation and alert the Agency if they are not already aware</p> <p>Child's Social Worker to alert the Barnsley LADO</p> <p>Child's Social Worker to alert the Service Manager Provider Services</p> <p>If the IFA carer does not reside in Barnsley the investigation should follow the procedures of the Local Authority in which they reside. Contact should be made as a matter of urgency with the relevant LADO and the Provider Agency.</p> <p>Following consultation with the Children's Team Manager, Service Manager Provider Services and the Barnsley LADO any action to be taken must be reported to the Head of the Safeguarding Unit, who will inform the Commissioning Manager.</p> <p>In addition to any investigation taken under safeguarding procedures by the child's social worker. An assessment should be considered for all children in placement to ensure the safety of all children placed is subject to scrutiny and oversight by the responsible Service Manager. This may be a number of service managers in a number of different authorities. When notification is received from OFSTED that an IFA provider has been rated inadequate, Commissioning should be informed and the notification recorded accurately.</p>	<p>Child's social worker and Team Manager</p> <p>Child's social worker and Team Manager</p> <p>Child's Social Worker and Team Manager</p>

6. Appendices

Appendix 1. What is a complaint against a foster carer which doesn't warrant action under these procedures?

A complaint against foster carers might come from a variety of sources including the child or young person themselves, parents or other family members, professionals or members of the public. They will not necessarily be safeguarding concerns.

A complaint may involve a view about the carers approach to the care of the child or the way in which they respond to the child's behaviour, their management of contact arrangements of day to day practice regarding general fostering practice.

Such complaints could be investigated through the normal complaints channel or could be taken up by the Fostering Support Worker through a 'standards of care' conversation.

Standards of Care

The Fostering service may have concerns about a foster carer which may not warrant investigation under the child protection procedures but do raise significant concerns about the standards of care being provided.

Standards of care issues might include:-

- An incident of physical chastisement resulting in no injury
- Inappropriate verbal chastisement
- Issues regarding pocket money, quality of food, bed-times etc.
- Incidents indicating inadequate supervision
- Accidents such as wrongly administered medication not resulting in significant harm

Standards of care issues should consider previous history of concerns and whether these are significant to an overall picture of risk

The Fostering Team Manager must be informed of any standards of care issues. In a situation where it is unclear whether the matter constitutes a formal allegation against a foster carer (as opposed to a standards of care issue) the Fostering Team Manager should consult the LADO who will discuss and advise on the allegation management threshold and where a situation is appropriate for management by the fostering team and where an investigation should be undertaken. Where necessary an evaluation meeting may be called to consider information-sharing process and focus of investigation

The plan for enquiry will depend on the nature and seriousness of the concern. Careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis as to whether the investigation should be

- a. Conducted by the fostering social worker within the parameters of usual foster carer supervision
- b. Be dealt with by an experienced social worker from the fostering service who is independent of the foster carer

c. Be dealt with by the Fostering Team Manager

Depending on the nature of the concern the Fostering Team Manager in consultation with the Service Manager Provider Services will decide whether the report needs to be presented to the Fostering Panel which will trigger a review of the foster carer's approval so that they may make a recommendation about their continued suitability.

If the decision is that the report should be presented to the Fostering Panel this should be at the next available Panel. The report and recommendations should include:

- The carer's suitability and competence to foster
- Matters relevant to the placement of all children currently in the foster carer's household
- The placement of other children in the future and any variations in approval
- Implications for the registration of the foster carers
- Identified training needs and additional support requirements

It will be the responsibility of the Fostering Team Manager to ensure that appropriate support is made available to the foster carers which is independent of any complaint or investigation.

If a complaint regarding standards of care has been made and concluded the outcome of the investigation should be shared with the foster carer and recorded on the foster carer's file. The details should include

- Details of the nature and source of the concern
- Decision-reached and rationale
- How the carers have been or will be made aware of the outcome of the investigation
- Where required a plan of how standards of care are to be maintained and when standards will be reviewed and how.

Appendix 2 Support for Foster Carers

Support for Foster Carers who have had allegations or serious Complaints made against them

Allegations and serious complaints against foster carers will impact differently on foster families according to the:

- Nature of the allegation or complaint;
- Potential consequences for the foster carer;
- Previous experiences of the foster carer;
- Level of stress or discord within the family;
- Individual resilience of the family members.

For these reasons a range of support services are provided and it should be for the foster family concerned to decide which levels of support they need. This may change during the process of an investigation into allegations or serious complaints.

Peer Support

Foster carers will be offered Peer Support provided by Skill level 4 or 5 foster carers who have been trained in supporting carers subject to allegations and understand their role in terms of peer-mentoring and 'buddy' support.

A list of these mentor carers would be given to carers subject to allegations for them to contact a person of their choice on the list. Choices may be based on a previous knowledge of the mentor or may be based on knowing that the mentor is not part of the carer's own network. Mentor carers who are approached in this way are required to discuss this with their fostering social worker before agreeing to undertake the task.

They will be able to provide the following confidential support within the context of child protection responsibilities:

- Be available for telephone contact including evenings and weekends;
- Be willing to meet/visit carers by prior agreement as requested for a time limited period as agreed by the team leader;
- May attend meetings, including the Fostering Panel to support the carer.

The trained foster carers who provide peer support will be facilitated/co-ordinated by the Fostering Support Team Manager.

Independent Counselling

In exceptional circumstances it may be agreed by the Service Manager to offer face to face counselling from an independent, qualified counsellor.

Barnsley use FISS to offer independent support to carers affected by allegations.

Role of the Supervising Social Worker

The role of the supervising social worker should be to:

- Be informed of the allegation from the outset;
- Attend the strategy discussions;
- Link with investigating social workers about when to make contact with the carer(s);
- Contact the carer as determined at the strategy discussion;
- Ensure the carer receives appropriate information and advice;
- Attend any follow up interview with the carer and her/his family, unless this is judged inappropriate.

Appendix 3 Further Sources of Information

- 'Safer Caring Handbook (Fostering Network)' is available from fostering teams and should be read by all foster carers. Kent County Council also provides 'Safer Caring' training for all foster carers;
- 'Who Do We Trust?: The Abuse of Children Living Away from Home in the United Kingdom', – Andrew Kendrick – Paper presented to the 12th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect;
- "Protecting Children, Supporting Foster Carers" – Department for Education and Skills April 2006;
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' – 2015;
- Fostering Network has produced a booklet 'Allegations against Foster Carers' containing comprehensive advice which can be obtained at Central Books;
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services;
- National Minimum Standards: Fostering 2011.

Service Expectations of Foster Carers

1 Education

Attendance	<p>Carers should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the child/young person attends school/college/training.</p> <p>Child/young person to attend a school rated good/outstanding by OFSTED.</p> <p>Carers should raise any concerns about education with the social worker and Barnsley's Education team and/or the Virtual Head where appropriate.</p> <p>NB: Children shall not be taken out of school for non-medical reasons other than in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Holidays shall not be in term time where a child would be taken out of school.</p>
To and from	<p>All children to be dropped off at school and picked up from school by their carer unless the child/young person care plan states otherwise and/or it is a part of independence planning.</p> <p>Walking to school is to be encouraged where appropriate (all ages.)</p>
Parent's evenings	<p>Carers must attend all parents' evenings.</p>
Homework	<p>Carers must encourage and assist the child/young person to do their homework through a positive home learning environment and liaise with the child/young person school as appropriate.</p> <p>Carers should familiarise themselves with the course work requirements and support the child/young person in achieving this.</p>
Computer	<p>Each child/young person of school age must have access to a computer with broadband and managed internet access to undertake their homework.</p> <p>Access to the internet should be safe for a young person, ensuring that there are appropriate safeguards in place.</p>
Libraries	<p>Children under 11 years of age should be taken to a library at least 4 times a year and encouraged to read for recreation.</p> <p>The child/young person over 11 years should be actively encouraged to join and go to a library regularly. Additionally carers should purchase suitable age appropriate books for child/young person to keep.</p>
Sickness and exclusions	<p>Carer/s must be available to be at home with the child/young person if the child/young person is sick or has been excluded from school.</p>
School shows and events	<p>Carer/s must attend school shows and events.</p>

Service Expectations

Education support	<p>To attend any Termly Personal Education Plan (T-PEP) meetings as required and undertake agreed home learning support tasks.</p> <p>The child will have ready access to a PC/laptop and internet/broadband to do homework on a daily basis.</p> <p>Support and guidance is also available from the Virtual Head.</p>
Routines	<p>Reading to and with children under 11 should be routine and included in bedtime arrangements.</p> <p>Family meal times should be actively used to promote discussion. Adequate sleep and sleeping patterns are to be highly valued.</p>
Choices in Education	<p>Ensure the young person access the school Connexions advisor at 13 years (year 9) to explore options post 16.</p>

2 Health

Registration	<p>Carers should ensure that the child/young person is registered with a GP, dentist and (if appropriate) health visitor within 72 hours of the placement.</p>
Appointments	<p>Carer to book and attend / accompany the child/young person to all GP and hospital appointments as required.</p> <p>Carer to inform the social worker of any significant change in the child/young person's health.</p>
Advice	<p>Carers should be trained and enabled to give advice to & know where to access advice for, the child/young person regarding healthy diet, self-care, sexual health etc.</p>
Toiletries, personal hygiene and skin/hair care products	<p>All appropriate toiletries, including skin and hair care products and regular haircuts/appointments to be provided.</p> <p>From the age of 11 the young person is aware of need for personal hygiene and can maintain appropriate standards</p>
Glasses and contact lenses	<p>Provide glasses and contact lenses as required, including replacement of accidental damage or loss. Optician to specify an ophthalmic check-up but should be at least every year.</p>
Health	<p>Child/young person to be registered with a GP and receive an annual health assessment.</p> <p>Dental check-up to be received at least once a year.</p> <p>To provide sexual health guidance (at 13+) to reduce incidence of teenage pregnancy and encourage positive life choices (including contraception if agreed).</p> <p>To complete an annual Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) review and initial Social/Emotional Screening for children aged 0-4 entering the care system.</p>

Service Expectations

Diet and Exercise	Use of healthy diet and food intake to promote a health and avoid obesity. Physical activity and exercise to be actively promoted as fundamental lifestyle component
0-4 Years	Attend clinic as required and ensure good engagement with named Health Visitor
Medication Policy	All carers are required to be familiar with and follow Barnsley's Medication Policy

3 Mental Health

Appointments	Carer to book and attend/accompany the child/young person to all appointments as required. Carer to inform the social worker of any significant change in the child/young person's mental health.
Training	Where appropriate carers receiving a child/young person with known mental health issues should be appropriately trained and supported to cope with any arising issues.

4 "Family time" – all subject to agreed risk assessment

Promote	Carers should encourage and promote family time between the child/young person and her family or significant others where this is an agreed part of the child/young person's care plan.
Facilitate	Carers should facilitate and make welcome the child/young person's family members or significant others where this is an agreed part of the child/young person's care plan.
Arrange	Carers should arrange "family time" between siblings placed separately, family members or significant others where this is an agreed part of the child/young person's care plan.
Attend	Carers should attend "family time" to support child/young person if so requested by either the child/young person or the social worker.
Supervise	Carers should supervise "family time" where this is appropriate and where this is an agreed part of the child/young person's care plan.
Transport	Carers should provide transportation if required to and from any "family time" sessions unless otherwise agreed in the care plan
Telephone calls	Telephone calls to family members (within the UK) and social services. As agreed in the care plan

Service Expectations

5 Identity

Promote	<p>Carers should promote a positive image of the child/young person's ethnicity, culture and religion.</p> <p>The carer should attend with the child/young person any appropriate activities, church or place of worship in order to promote the child/young person's identity in a positive way.</p>
Celebrations	<p>Carers should celebrate any cultural or religious festivals or rites of passage with the child/young person.</p>
Food	<p>Carers must ensure that the meals they provide comply with the child's dietary, cultural and religious needs.</p>
Events	<p>Carers should attend with or facilitate the attendance of the child/young person any cultural events or activities that would promote the child/young person's identity.</p>
Life story	<p>Carers should be trained to either produce or actively contribute to and promote life story work in conjunction with the social worker.</p>
Photo books / scrap books	<p>Carers should take regular photographs of the child/young person and these should be put into a photo book with details of who is in the photograph, the event and the date.</p> <p>This should also include comments about the event from both the carer and the child/young person. Electronic alternatives may be a more appropriate where they can be used securely</p>

6 Reports

Serious significant events	<p>Any child protection issues and all other notifiable events should be reported to the social worker or EDT straight away and be followed up in writing as soon as possible (by email) but at most within 24 hours. Contact the Emergency Duty Team.</p>
Diaries	<p>Carers must keep a daily diary of significant events, behaviour, activities & observations.</p> <p>This diary should be shared with the child's SW when requested.</p>
Reports – LAC reviews	<p>Carers should produce a comprehensive report for the child/young person's LAC review. This report must be sent to the SW at least two weeks prior to the LAC review.</p>

Service Expectations

7 Reviews

Attend	Carers and where possible their supervising social worker must attend every LAC review.
Facilitate	Carers should make a suitable area in their homes available for holding the child/young person LAC review unless for safety reasons it is decided that this is not possible.
Consultation forms	Carers should ensure that they complete any consultation documents and that they encourage and/or assist the young person to complete any consultation documents.
Participation	The carers should encourage the young person to participate in care planning and reviews in an age appropriate way.

8 Independence and life skills

Skills Training	Between the age of 16.5yrs and 17.5yrs, ensure the young person attend any suitable semi-independent skills courses particularly those delivered by Future Directions
Savings and budgeting	<p>Carers should encourage a savings habit with the child/young person, which should be discussed and agreed at the initial placement meeting.</p> <p>Carers should help the child/young person to understand how to budget responsibly by both example and by setting tasks agreed in the child/young person's care plan.</p>
Shopping	Where age appropriate carers should encourage the child/young person to food and clothes shop wisely and healthily within a set weekly and monthly budget.
Menu planning	Where age appropriate carers should encourage the child/young person to plan healthy weekly menus using a set budget.
Cooking	Where age appropriate carers should encourage the child/young person to cook healthy meals using a set budget
Cleaning and maintaining a home	<p>The child/young person's should be given age and ability appropriate household tasks and responsibilities.</p> <p>This should be discussed and agreed at the placement meeting and reviewed at LAC reviews.</p>
Basic DIY skills	Where age appropriate carers should assist the child/young person. To acquire basic DIY skills.
Preparation for independence	<p>Includes life skills, setting up bank accounts, management of finance and budgeting as appropriate.</p> <p>All 16 year olds to have their own personal bank account. As appropriate to the young person's skills and understanding carers should encourage them to take increasing responsibility for paying for clothing, recreation and other activities.</p>
Starting to prepare a new home	Foster carers should support young people from their 17th birthday to start to collect key equipment which they will require when moving to independence such as bed linen, towels, electrical equipment.

Service Expectations

9 Recreation

Encourage	<p>Carers should encourage the child/young person to take up, join and participate in suitable age appropriate personal and group activities. Carers should support and encourage the child/young person to make and maintain suitable friendships.</p> <p>For younger children carer/s should arrange with other parents/carers for their children to play at the child/young person's home and for the child/young person to visit other children.</p>
Facilitate	<p>Carers should fund and facilitate age appropriate personal and group activities.</p>
Exercise and sport	<p>Carers should encourage the child/young person to exercise regularly and should encourage the child/young person to engage in sports activities.</p> <p>Carers should ensure that children in their care learn to swim unless a review decision indicates that this would put the child at risk.</p>
Family outings	<p>Carers should plan regular family outings and activities.</p>
School holiday activities	<p>Carers should ensure that sufficient funds are set aside to pay for school holiday activities.</p>
Leisure outings and activities	<p>Family outings and agreed leisure activities. With specific relevance to hobbies – support for up to 2 after school class and 1 weekend activity to be included. Promoting accessing after school clubs.</p>
Holidays	<p>It is expected that children and young people will accompany their foster carers on family holidays and they should not left behind under any circumstances.</p>
Suitcase	<p>However where the adult carers are taking a short break and all the children in the family are cared for over short periods by family or friends then, using the delegated responsibilities arrangements, it would be acceptable for fostered children to remain at home.</p> <p>Foster carers are expected to purchase a suitcase for a foster child which they use when leaving the placement. It is not acceptable to move children's clothes and belongings in bin bags.</p>

10 Safe Care

24 hour supervised care and accommodation	<p>Accommodation, food and safe care that meets the child/young person's needs.</p>
Carers	<p>Carers are able to act as appropriate adults if a child is arrested for any reason and also to attend court with their child if necessary</p>
Clothing (general) and school uniform	<p>Provide appropriate clothing as required including school uniform / activity wear.</p>

Service Expectations

11 Facilities & Decor

Single rooms	Every child/young person should have their own bedroom unless they are siblings and / or it is considered appropriate for them to share a room.
Minimum furniture	Every the child/young person should have a bed, wardrobe & chest of drawers. The child/young person should have access to a suitable quiet area with a table and chair for undertaking homework.
Décor	Every home's décor should be clean and maintained to a reasonable standard. The child/young person's bedroom should be decorated in an age appropriate way. Facility should be available for the child/young person to personalise their bedrooms. Garden's and external décor should be maintained to a reasonable standard

12 Transport

Contact appointments, education and recreation	Where Children and Young People require transport that is in excess of 25 miles a week this need to be agreed as part of the placement plan. The foster carer must hold a full driving licence, be insured and using road worthy transport. The carer must notify their link worker within 2 working days should they receive penalty points for any motoring offence.
--	--