



North Tyneside Council Fostering Handbook

The Child's Care Arrangements Section 3

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Types of fostering arrangement and plans of permanence.

1. Introduction

There are many different types of fostering arrangements as outlined to you within your initial interview, assessment and Foster Carer payment guide.

2. Permanence

Long-term Fostering:

When you are caring for a child who has a care plan for permanence a long-term fostering arrangement will be explored with you. There is a clear pathway for this which will be supported by information from your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker.

Special Guardianship Order or Adoption.

Alongside long-term fostering some Foster Carers may wish to consider securing the child in your care via a permanent legal order. This would be via Adoption or a Special Guardianship Order. If this is something that you are interested in, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance and they will support and guide you through the process should you wish to proceed. Please see the [Foster Carers Adopting Policy and SGO finance guide](#) for further information.

Support on offer

An arrangement of long-term fostering or having a child under an SGO both promote direct family time arrangements with the child's birth family. This is once again something which the Fostering Service would support you with until the child was 18 years of age.

Should you care for a child under any plan of permanence then you will receive support from either the Fostering Service, the Post SGO Support Team or Adopt North East. This includes support, advice, information and training for yourself alongside social opportunities for you to meet other people in the same situation as yourself for peer support.

3. How Many Children can I care for?

During your assessment you and your Assessing Social Worker will discuss the number of children you should care for, this will be agreed by the Fostering Panel and ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). There are times, however, when the Fostering Service may ask you to take a child/young person outside your approval range if it is felt this would be the best way to meet the child's needs.

When this happens, the Fostering Service will ask for permission via the ADM to vary your approval for a short time. A Foster Care Review will then be held within a three-month period to consider your approval category and agree whether your terms of approval remain appropriate or need to be changed. This Foster Care Review will then be agreed by the Fostering Team Manager and then ratified by the ADM.

4. Exemptions

The Children Act 1989 prescribes a 'usual fostering limit' of three children unless:

- The foster children are all siblings (then there is no upper limit); or
- The Local Authority within whose area the Foster Carer lives exempts the carer from the usual fostering limit in relation to specific children.

In considering whether to exempt a person from the usual fostering limit, the Local Authority must consider:

- The number of children whom the person proposes to foster;
- The arrangements which the person proposes for the care and accommodation of the fostered children;
- The intended and likely relationship between the person and the fostered children;
- The period of time for which he/she proposes to foster the children; and
- Whether the welfare of the fostered children (and any other children who are or will be living in the accommodation) will be safeguarded and protected.

In many cases the welfare of a child needing a fostering home will be best served by being the only foster child in the family. Where more than one child is to be placed, the interests of both must be carefully considered. The needs of the Foster Carer and their household must also be considered. These points should be kept in mind when considering the approval of a Foster Carer for the arrangement of two or more children who are unrelated.

The decision to make an exemption to the usual fostering limit lies only with the Agency Decision Maker of the Fostering Service.



North Tyneside Council

Policy for when Foster Carer/s Adopt a Child in their Care

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1. Purpose of Policy

- 1.1 Approved Foster Carers can and do make excellent Adopters. Accordingly, the Agency will seek to support Foster Carers to actively consider whether to adopt a child in their care. Adoption of a child already known and in the care of Foster Carers can achieve for the child permanence without a move. It can also provide Foster Carers with full parental responsibility for the child and facilitate meaningful integration of the child into their life and family as they become a forever family for the child. It can and often is a great outcome for both child and carers.
- 1.2 This policy seeks to ensure that Foster Carers are supported by the Agency to fully understand what the change from Foster Carers to Adopters means, particularly in terms of the implications for their future fostering career.
- 1.3 Like other Adopters, adoption represents a significant change to the lives of Foster Carers. However, as professional Carers, this can be less obvious. The Agency will work sensitively with Foster Carers to understand what the differences are.
- 1.4 Key differences that the Agency will support the Foster Carers to understand include that:

- Adoption is a permanent commitment to the child;
- Adoption confers sole parental responsibility for the child and a financial and emotional commitment for life;
- The support available to Adopters is different from the support available to Foster Carers;
- The financial support for the care of the child as a fostered child and that available to Foster Carers will cease and that financial support as an adopter differs;
- A continuation of their Fostering role is not a given and, if appropriate, will be subject to re-assessment of their suitability to foster in light of the change to the family and household as a result of the adoption.

2. Registration of Interest

- 2.1 If a Foster Carer indicates an interest in potentially adopting a child in their care, it is important that they are supported to come to an informed decision. Their primary support in making this decision will be their Fostering Social Worker.
- 2.2 Subject to the support of the Fostering Social Worker, the Agency will arrange for a timely information sharing meeting with the Foster Carers. This meeting will include:
- The Child's Social Worker
 - The Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker
 - Family Finder (if allocated) or an Adoption Social Worker

The purpose of this meeting is to support the Foster Carers to come to an informed decision. The visit is not a decision-making visit. It is the opportunity for all parties to expand their understanding of the issues involved.

- 2.3 If the Foster Carers indicate that they wish to progress, they will be assessed as to whether they are suitable to adopt.

3. Assessment Process

- 3.1 A skilled Foster Carer will not be assumed to be an appropriate adoptive parent for a child, even if the child is well cared for by the Foster Carer. There will be a strong presumption in favour, but this presumption will be tested by assessment and detailed consideration of the needs of the child and the competencies of the Foster Carers as prospective adopters.

- 3.2 Following an informed decision by the Foster Carers to register their interest in being assessed as adopters for a child in their care, an assessment must be completed and considered by the Adoption Panel within four months of the date on which they registered their interest.
- 3.3 Should the Agency decide not to approve the Foster Carers as suitable, the reasons of the Agency may need to be considered at a Fostering Review. However, it is noted that not being approved as suitable to adopt does not mean that the Foster Carers are not suitable in a fostering role.
- 3.4 Should the Agency decide to approve the Foster Carers as suitable to adopt a child already in their care, it is likely that approval and match will be considered consecutively at Panel.

4. Financial Implications of approval of Foster Carers as Adopters

- 4.1 Adoption represents a significant change in the circumstances of the Foster Carers, becoming 'parents' rather than 'carers' for the child. Significantly, it also changes the financial entitlements for the Foster Carers. These changes are detailed below:

Entitlement to Allowances for the child being adopted

- 4.2 Upon the Agency Decision to match the child with the Adoptive Foster Carers, all the allowances paid to them as approved Foster Carers will immediately cease. Instead, a **Transitional Allowance** will commence. The Transitional Allowance is an adoption entitlement to help the former Foster Carers (now Adopters) to transition from the loss of income derived from the Fostering role in relation to the child. It is not means-tested and is time-limited.
- 4.3 The amount of Transitional Allowance to be paid is the amount that was paid to the Foster Carers in relation to the specific child at the time of the Agency Decision, minus child benefit and tax credits to which they, as Adopters, are entitled.
- 4.4 The Transitional Allowance will commence at the point of the Agency Decision for a period of exactly twelve months. The amount paid by the Agency will taper as follows:
- | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------------------|
| • | 0-6 Months | 100% of Fostering Allowance |
| • | 6-9 months | 75% of Fostering Allowance |
| • | 9-12 months | 50% of Fostering Allowance |
| • | 12 months plus | 0% of Fostering Allowance |
- 4.5 As Adopters, the former Foster Carers are entitled at any point to request an assessment for eligibility for an Adoption Allowance. This is a means-tested allowance and is not time-limited (although it is reviewed annually). Should it be

paid, the amount paid as an Adoption Allowance will be deducted from the Transitional Allowance for the period of the Adoption Allowance.

Entitlement to other Allowances: Ongoing Long-term Fostering

- 4.6 Where other children are in long-term foster care with the Foster Carers, the adoption of the child does not affect the allowances paid by the Agency in respect of the other children.

Entitlement to other Allowances: Following Termination of Fostering Approval

- 4.7 Where, as part of the approval as suitable adopters for the child, the Foster Carers were required to resign as approved Foster Carers and they were approved to temporarily care for one or more children in addition to the child now adopted, the Foster Carers are likely to experience a loss of income derived from their termination of approval to undertake this Fostering role.
- 4.8 In these circumstances the Foster Carers (now Adopters) are entitled to additional monies as part of the Transitional Allowance. These monies are an adoption entitlement to help the Foster Carers to transition from the loss of income derived from their Fostering role in relation to other children. It is not means-tested and it is time-limited.
- 4.9 The amount of additional monies to be paid is calculated by reference to the average amount of allowance paid to the Foster Carers for care of a child or children over the preceding twelve month period. This enables some adjustment for Foster Carers who temporarily cared for complex, older or sibling children and who were in receipt of a higher allowance as a result.
- 4.10 The Transitional Allowance will commence at the point of the Agency Decision for a period of exactly twelve months. The amount paid by the Agency will taper as follows:

- 0-6 Months 100% of Average Fostering Allowance
- 6-9 months 75% of Average Fostering Allowance
- 9-12 months 50% of Average Fostering Allowance
- 12 months plus 0% of Average Fostering Allowance

Entitlement to other Allowances: Following Suspension of Fostering Approval

- 4.11 Where, as part of the approval as suitable adopters for the child, the Foster Carers were required to be suspended as approved Foster Carers and they were approved to temporarily care for one or more children in addition to the child now adopted, the Foster Carers are likely to experience a loss of income derived from their suspension of approval to undertake this Fostering role.

- 4.12 In these circumstances, the Foster Carers (now Adopters) are entitled to a **Temporary Suspension Allowance**. This allowance is an adoption entitlement to ensure that the Foster Carers are not subject to a temporary loss of income ordinarily derived from their Fostering role in relation to other children. It is not means-tested and is limited to the length of time of the suspension of approval.
- 4.13 The amount of the Temporary Suspension Allowance to be paid is calculated by reference to the average amount of allowance paid to the Foster Carers for care of a child or children over the preceding twelve month period. This enables some adjustment for Foster Carers who temporarily cared for complex, older or sibling children and who were in receipt of a higher allowance as a result.
- 4.14 The Temporary Suspension Allowance will commence at the point of the Agency Decision for the period of the suspension. The amount paid by the Agency will not taper:
- Period of Suspension – 100% of Average Fostering Allowance

Exceptional Hardship Assistance for Adopters who were formerly Foster Carers

- 4.15 Where an Adopter's immediate circumstances are such that assessment by the Council is that they would not be able to remain Adopters for the child, the responsible Senior Manager may consider a discretionary payment to support the maintenance of the care arrangement. Each case will be unique and based on the assessed needs of the child, the particular circumstances of the Adopters and the immediacy and level of risk to the care arrangement disrupting.
- 4.16 Where the Council offers a single sum of over £250, a clear written agreement will be drawn up so all parties are clear about the intended purpose and use of the payment.
- 4.17 Where the Council offers a series of payments, these will be time-limited and will be reviewed every six weeks for the duration of the agreed period of payment. A clear written agreement will be drawn up so all parties are clear about the intended purpose and use of the payments.

5. Suspension and Termination of Approval

Suspension

- 5.1 It is the policy of the Agency that it will ordinarily suspend the approval of Foster Carers previously approved as temporary carers for a child or children other than the adopted child from the date of the Agency Decision to match. The decision of the Agency Decision Maker is final.

- 5.2 The intention of the suspension is to afford the Adopters a period of ‘Adoption Leave’ from their ordinary fostering role and responsibilities. It is analogous with leave from other types of employment and intended to enable the Adopters to focus on the needs of the child – even if well-known and established within the home and family of the Adopters – with a particular focus on maximising secure attachments to the Adopters as forever parents.
- 5.3 The minimum period of suspension before re-assessment will commence is from **six months from the Agency Decision to Match**. The period will enable the adoptive child and carers to settle into their new family life together. The Agency may propose a longer period, depending upon the particular circumstances of the carers and needs of the child.
- 5.4 Following the minimum period of suspension agreed by the Agency, re-assessment will take place to inform a decision as to suitability to be approved to resume their Fostering role. Re-assessment must take **no more than four months** before consideration by Fostering Panel.
- 5.5 As noted, adoption represents a significant change in the circumstances of the Foster Carers and reassessment will focus on these changes and in particular, the impact of the fostering role on the adopted child.
- 5.6 Assessment may result in one of the following recommendations to Panel:
- Resumption of Fostering on previous Terms of Approval
 - Resumption of Fostering but with changed Terms of Approval
 - A recommendation of termination of approval
- 5.7 The reassessment process will result in consideration of the suitability to Foster by Panel and a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker. Foster Carers will, accordingly, have a right to attend Panel and make representations. They will also have a right to written representations or referral to the Independent Review Mechanism if appropriate.

Termination

- 5.8 Exceptionally, the Agency may require as part of their suitability to adopt their resignation from their fostering role. Such a requirement is likely to be based on the specific needs of the adopted child and intended to enable the Adopters to focus on the needs of the child – even if well-known and established within the home and family of the Adopters – with a particular focus on maximising secure attachments to the Adopters as forever parents.

Understanding Placement Plans and Child in Care Reviews

1. Introduction

The Fostering Service will share with you all of the available information that they have from the referral form provided by the Child's Social Worker, before they come to live with you in your home. It is a legal requirement that you receive written information within 10 working days of any child coming to live with you. No known information should be withheld from you. Should you feel you have not received the necessary information required to care for any child in your care please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance.

2. The Child's Care Plan

The Care Plan is a document that must be drawn up where a child is within the care of the Local Authority. It provides information relating to the child and their family and will describe the child's individual care needs and how these can be met. A child's care plan reflects all areas of the child's needs such as health and education and will support your understanding of how to advocate for and promote these with the involved professional's.

At the second Child in Care Review every child's care plan will reflect a plan of permanence, including the option of returning to their parent's care.

The child's overarching Care Plan should include:

- Placement Plan (how Foster Carers will contribute to meeting the child's needs);
- Permanence Plan (long-term plans for the child's upbringing including timescales);
- Pathway Plan (where appropriate, for young people leaving care);
- Education, Health and Care Plan;

3. The Placement Planning Meeting

Every time a child comes to live in your home, a Placement Planning Meeting will be arranged either before, on the day, or within 5 working days of any child coming to live with you. The child's parents, the child (age depending), the child's Social Worker, the duty worker from the Fostering Service and any other relevant professionals will also be in attendance at this meeting.

This meeting details the expectations and routines of the child, as well as how their needs will be met in the fostering household.

The Placement Planning meeting paperwork covers the following areas:

- Reasons for the child coming into the care of the Local Authority.
- Arrangements for the child's education and training, including the name and address of the child's school/other educational institution/provider and designated teacher; the Local Authority maintaining any Education, Health and Care Plan.
- The child's personal/cultural history.
- The child's likes/dislikes.
- Arrangements for the child's health (physical, emotional and mental) and dental care, including the name and address of registered medical and dental practitioners.
- Agreements for family time between the child and those members of their family and any significant others as agreed by their Social Worker.
- Frequency of Social Work visits to the child and yourself, alongside any review meetings.
- If an Independent Visitor needs to be appointed and who will be responsible for arranging this.
- Delegated Authority will also be agreed with parents, so Foster Carers are clear on what they can consent to for the child. This will include:
 - Medical and dental treatment (medical consent), including immunisations and who should be in attendance;
 - Education and school trips;
 - Overnight stays;
 - Leisure and home life;
 - Faith and religious observance;
 - Use of social media;
 - Any other matters which are considered appropriate.

4. Child in Care Reviews

A Child in Care Review (Statutory Review as it is sometimes known) is a meeting that covers the arrangements for making sure the plans put in place for a child in care happen.

The Local Authority is required by law to regularly review children in care. Reviews should take place as often as the circumstances of the individual case requires but the minimum standard for frequency of reviews is as follows:

- Within 20 working days of the child becoming a child in care;

- Then within 3 months of an initial Child in Care Review;
- Then subsequent Child in Care Reviews should be conducted not more than 6 months after any previous review.

The reviews are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). It is the role of the IRO to coordinate the review meeting, ensuring all professionals involved with the child are in attendance or that their views have been represented. This is to ensure that the child's needs are at the centre of all plans.

These Review Meetings are formal meetings which are attended by a number of professional's involved with the child and their family. These may include-

- Child's Social Worker
- The child
- Child's parents
- Health professional's
- Educational professional's
- Probation (if applicable to parents)
- Legal representatives from both Local Authority and parents.
- Child's Guardian
- Any professional's working with the child or family.

Your Supervising Social Worker will attend these meetings with you, wherever possible, to support you in advocating for the children in your care. You will be asked to complete paperwork, which will be sent to you prior to the meeting, so the IRO is clear regarding your views of the child's individual care needs. You will also be asked for specific information such as when they attended the dentist or health information. Should you have any concerns about any aspect of a child's care plan please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance.

The IRO must be notified of any significant changes in the child's circumstances by the Child's Social Worker and consider whether a Child in Care Review should be held earlier than the scheduled date. This could include the following sorts of circumstances:

- A proposed change of Care Plan, arising at short notice in the course of court proceedings.
- Major change to the family time arrangements.
- When a child is leaving from the fostering home

This is not an exhaustive list and other events considered to be significant may prompt an earlier review. The decision whether to have an early review is the IRO's.

The first Child in Care Review following a young person's 16th birthday should consider whether a Staying Put arrangement (whereby the young person remains in the foster home after the age of 18) could be an option. This is something that will be discussed with you prior to this review by your Supervising Social Worker so that you are fully aware of the implications of this decision.

Caring for children.

Introduction

When a child first comes into your home this can be unsettling time for everyone in the household. This includes both the child who has come to live with you, your own children and yourselves. However, your Supervising Social Worker is there to support you through this time alongside the child's Social Worker who will be visiting them on a regular basis.

Supervisory visits from your allocated Social Worker will take place regularly depending upon a variety of factors. These include both the child's needs and your own as a Foster Carer for example, as a newly approved Foster Carer, or when dealing with complex and emerging behaviours supervisory visits will take place more frequently than in long term settled arrangements. The timeliness of all supervisory visits is agreed by the Team Manager and are flexible by nature given that we are dealing with children and young people whose needs change. In most cases visits will take place every 4-6 weeks, however on occasions this may extend to 8 weeks.

Caring for a child in your care

As a Foster Carer you are responsible for the day-to-day care needs of all the children you have in your care. This includes, taking the children to and from their school or Nursery. Please note a child's education setting will not be changed until a plan of permanence with you is agreed in the future. Alongside this you will be responsible for maintain/ and or encouraging out of school activities to promote the child's all-round health and wellbeing, for example sports clubs, Brownies, Scouts etc.

It is important that as a child's primary care giver that you are fully involved in their education and liaise with their educational setting as and when needed. This will differ depending on the age and educational needs of each child, but Foster Carers are responsible for ensuring that a child attends school ready for learning for all that they will need each day. If a child is struggling in school for whatever reason or has an Education, Health and Care Plan then you will need to work with the school

closely, to ensure the child's educational needs are met. Such support for the child will also include issues around school attendance, homework and peer relationships.

If you are concerned about the child that you are caring for in relation to their health, education and social and emotional development please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance. They can offer one to one support and recommend training for you to manage your individual situation and circumstances. Alongside this the [HiVE Team](#) can also offer support and training to Foster Carers and children. They can also support the individual school should this be needed.

Family time arrangements are also a regular feature of all children and young people's care plans. Wherever possible you will be required to support with these arrangements and depending upon the circumstances this may include both transporting and facilitating the family time arrangement. However, there will be times where the child's Social Worker may supervise family time or may ask that this is facilitated by the Family Time Team. You will be made aware of the arrangements at the Placement Planning Meeting and any changes to these will only be made in conjunction with the Child's Social Worker.

As a Foster Carer you are responsible for meeting the child's day to day medical needs, for example attending GP appointments and administering medications such as inhalers etc. Any medication given to a child must be recorded on the medication sheet, provided to you at the placement planning meeting, and kept up to date at all times. Should the child become unwell for any reason and need an unscheduled GP appointment or attend hospital this should be arranged without delay and the child's Social Worker informed so that they can speak to the child's parents. Unfortunately, sometimes children will need to spend some time in hospital and during such times the expectation would be that as the child's primary carer you will stay with them during this time.

It is acknowledged that at times when meeting the needs of a child in your care, alongside Foster Carers existing commitments can be challenging. At times such as these Foster Carers are encouraged to seek the support of your Supervising Social Worker, alongside those people who have been identified and assessed as part of your support network. It is of note that whenever a child receives any hospital (either

as a day patient or if they stay overnight) this is something that must be reported to your Supervising Social Worker and the appropriate paperwork completed.

When a child leaves your care.

Children can leave your care in both a planned and unplanned way. We always aim to move children in a planned way, so that they know where they are going, and introductions can be made if they are not returning to the care of their parents. However, on rare occasions children may move in an unplanned way due to potential risks to either themselves, yourselves as Foster Carers or to your family. In which ever way a child moves you will be supported by your Supervising Social Worker who will, for example, ensure that you have provided the relevant luggage to move the child's possessions and will help coordinate this with the child's Social Worker. No child should ever move home with their possessions in anything other than appropriate suitcases or storage boxes. If in doubt, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker who will clarify what is and is not suitable luggage.

In the unfortunate event that you feel unable to offer ongoing care to a child, for whatever reason, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible. Should this result in an agreement that the care arrangement will end then formal notice should be given. This is given in writing and will allow the Fostering Service 28 days to find a suitable alternative carer. However, it is acknowledged that such arrangements can exceed 28 days and we would look to work with you to support the care arrangement and to move the child in a planned way as soon as possible.

When a care arrangement ends unexpectedly the Fostering Service may decide to organise a meeting to look at the full history of the child's time with you, including why the arrangement ended. Please see the [Disruption Meeting Policy](#) for further information and guidance.

Transitions

Introduction

Children may leave your home for a number of reasons, including when they return to the care of their family, when they are old enough to live independently, when they move in a planned way to another Foster Carer, or when they are adopted or placed with another family member. Whenever possible children move in a planned and organised way so that they feel safe and secure in their new home. Very rarely children will move in an unplanned way, however, everyone involved in their care planning will do all they can to avoid this.

You may feel anxious about the child/young person's move, this is natural and that's why it is important that clear plans are in place. Throughout this process you will the support of your Supervising Social Worker who you can call on at any time for advise and support.

Planning the move

When a care plan for a child involves moving them to the care of someone else, this is done with a great deal of planning from all involved. As the Foster Carer you will play a significant role in this given that you have undertaken the day-to-day care of the child. As you will know their routines, likes and dislikes you will play a key role in sharing this information with the child's new care giver and supporting them and the child in the transition process. Every child will have an individual transition plan which is agreed ahead of the child moving and is the responsibility of the Children's Social Worker to oversee. It is important that no one deviates from the agreed plan, unless this is with the agreement of the Social Worker in advance. Transition plans will be agreed in a meeting ahead of any introductions starting and will have a midpoint review.

Good Practice.

You have been the person who has provided the child with day-to-day care and they have been living in your home as part of your family, so therefore have an important part to play in helping them move to their new caregiver. When you are talking to the child about the move it is important that you are always positive about why they are moving and what will happen. This will support the child in understanding the reasons why they are leaving your home and that they will be safe and well cared for once they leave. It is also important that they know that you will keep in contact with them if this is part of their agreed care plan, this can be though, telephone calls, birthday cards etc.

Before a child leaves your family, some carers like to plan a way for them to say goodbye to your friends and family members who they have got to know whilst living

with you. This is also a good opportunity to take photographs so they can remember who the significant people were that they got to know. Such photographs can then be added to those you have gathered with the child during the time they have spent with you, and a reflection of the things you have done together.

To support the new care giver for the child you should complete a comprehensive list of information about the child or young person. This should include information about their daily routine, likes/dislikes, hobbies and interests, medication or medical information, dietary requirements etc. In addition to this it is important that you share any individual care needs for that child for example favourite toy, story or song to go to sleep. You should also include things that can instantly soothe the child or things that can upset them easily for example loud noises, fireworks, crowds or certain smells or situations.

When a child leaves you should ensure that the child's Social Worker receives all important documents in relation to that child for example, child's medical records, passport, birth certificate, bank account details etc. Mobile phone contracts should also be discussed with the child's Social Worker should these need to be changed in any way.

The child's belongings should always be moved in a suitcase or holdall and never in carrier bags.

Disruption Policy

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1. Definition of Disruption

A 'disruption' is the premature ending of a foster arrangement of a child in care.

A Disruption Meeting **should be considered** in the following circumstances:

- When a child experiences two unplanned endings in a 12-month period
- When Foster Carer/s experience two unplanned endings in a 12-month period
- When a Foster Carer ends the fostering arrangement without notice

A Disruption Meeting **must be convened** in the following circumstances:

- When a long-term **matched** arrangement, identified as part of a Care Plan disrupts
- When a fostering arrangement of over twelve months duration ends in an unplanned way

A Disruption Meeting is **not** appropriate when dealing with;

- Bridging placements
- Short-term placements, unless there has been a breakdown in more than one of these placements and a pattern is emerging.

A disruption can be at the request of the Foster Carer, Fostering Service, the placing authority or the child in care / young person, Childs IRO and the child's Social Worker.

2. Disruption Meeting Request

Within two days of the fostering arrangement disruption, the child's Social Worker, IRO or Supervising Social Worker must send an email request to the Fostering Service Manager.

3. Purpose of Disruption Meetings

Fostering arrangements breakdown through a combination of several factors. The objective of a disruption meeting is to look at the sequence of events and to learn from the experience. The purpose of the disruption meeting is not to attribute blame, it is important that all participants are aware of this. The purpose of disruption meetings are to:

- Provide all participants with an opportunity to share information, feelings and views about the causes of disruption
- Agree the factors that have led to the disruption
- Whether appropriate resources were provided to enable the Fostering arrangement to continue.
- Consider the needs of children in care and carers involved. Information gained can be used to inform future levels of support, training, development and whether further assessment is needed.
- Seek to identify learning opportunities, actions and areas of policy development for all agencies involved.

A disruption meeting could identify trends and patterns that would contribute to a future Care Plan for the specific child or children as well as more general learning points for the agency/agencies concerned.

4. When Disruption Meetings Should be Held

The timing of the disruption meeting may vary. It is important that the meeting is not held too soon after the fostering arrangement breakdown when participants may be defensive, or too long after when participants may be less able to recall the contributing factors.

In order to allow enough time for analysis and reflection a disruption meeting should be held within 4 – 6 weeks, unless a complaint is in process. In this instance, a disruption meeting should be held within 4-6 weeks of complaint resolution.

The Supervising Social Worker for the Foster Carer will arrange the disruption meeting with the Fostering Network IRO.

The Supervising Social Worker should arrange to have invitations sent to the key participants at the meeting.

5. Participants in Disruption Meetings

Participants required to attend the Disruption Meeting will vary depending on the nature of the disruption. Careful consideration must be made by the chairperson/facilitator in regard to who should be invited (and ultimately, attend).

In addition to the current child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker, consideration will be given to inviting the following participants;

- Minute taker
- The child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO);
- Carers involved in the disruption and their Supervising Social Worker at the time of disruption;
- Previous carers
- Present carers
- Fostering Team Manager
- Childs in care
- Child's advocate / representative;
- Previous Childs Social Worker, including child's Social Worker at the time of disruption;
- Safeguarding Team Manager
- Designated Teacher from school currently attended, previously attended and at the point of disruption;
- Health representatives e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, or Health Visitor;
- Any other agencies involved with the child/young person

Birth Parents may also be invited if it is felt that they could make a valid contribution. This must first be discussed and agreed with the chairperson

Participants who decline an invitation or are unable to attend will be required to present their views in writing.

If a child in care is unable to attend the disruption meeting, it is the responsibility of their current Social Worker to obtain their views and opinion.

It is the responsibility of the Fostering Service to obtain the views and opinion of current or previous carer who are unable to attend the meeting.

6. Preparing for the Disruption Meeting

It is imperative that as much information is made available to the chairperson in advance of the meeting to allow time for analysis. At the time of invitation to the disruption meeting a written report will be requested from the following:

- Child's Social Worker
- Supervising Social Worker
- Education Service
- Other significant agencies e.g, CAMHS, HIVE, Independent Visitor, Health Visitor.

Paperwork that should be provided to the chairperson/facilitator includes:

- Last child in care Review Documentation, including the Care Plan
- Placement Plan
- Last Foster Carer Review documentation
- Any previous Disruption Meeting Minutes, that either the child or the carer has experienced
- Any other relevant assessments
- Child's chronology
- Chronology of events leading up to the disruption and the support that was provided
- Any previous allegations or complains regarding the Foster Carer
- Form F/ Foster Carers assessment
- Matching Report

The written information should be provided to the Chair 2 weeks before the Disruption Meeting. Please note ONLY the chairperson/ of the disruption meeting will receive the reports and the paperwork, these are not to be distributed to anyone else.

7. Format of Disruption Meetings

Disruption Meetings will cover the following areas;

- Introductions
- Apologies
- Rules and purpose of the meeting

- The reasons why the child came into care i.e. details of the child's early life experiences and the circumstances why the child came into care
- Child's history since being in care
- Matching process
- Child and carer introduction process
- Child's experience of being in care
- Carer's fostering experience
- Chronology of events leading to the disruption
- Why the fostering household does not meet the child/young person's needs
- What could have made the fostering arrangement work?
- Was the Foster Carer Reviewing process robust?
- Identification of disruptive patterns
- Disruption and subsequent events
- Future Care Planning
- Learning points
- Conclusion and Recommendation

8. Recording of Disruption Meetings

It is the responsibility of the chairperson to ensure that an accurate account of the disruption meeting is recorded.

The record of the meeting will be distributed to all parties by the minute taker within 28 days of the meeting.

Any feedback or comments regarding the record of the disruption meeting should be returned to the chairperson within 14 days of receipt.

Minutes of the meeting should include a clear summary of the future needs of child and carers involved, as well as recommendations and follow up actions for agencies involved.

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1. Introduction

Staying Put enable child in care to remain with their carers beyond the age of 18, in order to:

- Build on and nurture their attachments to their carer's, so that they can move to their own accommodation at their own pace and be supported to make the transition to adulthood in a more gradual way, just like other young people who can rely on their own families for this support;
- Provide the stability and support necessary for young people to achieve, in education, training and employment;
- Give weight to young people's views about the timing of moves to greater independence from their final care placement.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 North Tyneside Council Ethos for Staying Put

Staying Put in North Tyneside should mirror family life.

It is about a young person **remaining** part of a family and not about living in a supported lodging arrangement. Nothing should change overnight just because a young person is 18, unless by prior agreement or for housing legal reasons. However, as the young person becomes a young adult there are a number of underlying principles that need to be considered, by the carers, workers and young people themselves.

See [Appendix 2: Living Together Agreement](#) for details.

In order to stay put, the young person must be an **eligible** child as defined in the Children Act 1989 Volume 3. The young person must be living in their fostering arrangement 24 hours prior to the Staying Put arrangement commencing.

2.2 Terminology

From the age of eighteen young people are no longer legally in 'Care' or 'a child in care' and therefore fostering arrangements and regulations no longer apply. Where a young person remains with their previous Foster Carer/s this becomes a Staying Put arrangement, according to the following conditions, that:

- Immediately prior to the young person's 18th birthday the Staying Put carers were registered (or remain registered if other fostered children remain in their care) as Foster Carer/s via the use of Schedule 3, Regulation 27 of the Fostering Regulations as a minimum standard;
- The young person was a child in care immediately prior to their 18th birthday and continues to reside with their former Foster Carers. The young person must be living with their Staying Put provider 24 hours prior to a Staying Put arrangement commencing;
- The young person is defined as Former Relevant under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000;
- A proportion of the allowance paid to the Staying Put carers is paid by North Tyneside Council's Children's Social Care under Section 23C;
- The Pathway Plan sets out that the young person is remaining with their former Foster Carer/s under a Staying Put arrangement.

In circumstances where a young person returns to a Staying Put household during higher education or residential further education vacation periods the above criteria must continue to apply.

3. Eligibility for Staying Put

3.1 Who Can Stay Put?

A young person can stay put if they are 18 years of age and are in a fostering household provided by North Tyneside's Council under Section 20 or Section 31 of the Children Act (1989)

3.2 Who Cannot Stay Put?

- A young person in residential care;
- A young person living with a Special Guardian;
- A disabled young person who could not be expected to live independently by the age of 21. This young person would continue to be subject to transitional care arrangements and would possibly be referred to the Adult Placement Scheme before the age of 18. Staying Put is not intended to replace the process whereby disabled young people who meet the relevant criteria transfer to adult case services such as 'shared lives' placements. A shared lives arrangement could continue post 21 whereas a Staying Put arrangement will end at 21.

4. Planning for a Young Person to Stay Put

The option of Staying Put should be identified within the young person's Pathway Planning process from the age of 16 and put in their pathway plan. Local Authorities have a specific duty to consider the possibility of Staying Put when undertaking the assessment of the young person's needs within three months of their 16th birthday. The Social Worker should inform the Leaving Care Team if a Staying Put arrangement has been identified as an option and is being considered by the young person and Foster Carers.

An arrangement to Stay Put must be agreed by both the young person and the Foster Carers. Information about the difference between a Fostering arrangement and a Staying Put arrangement should be given to the Young Person and Foster Carers by the Supervising Social Worker, Social Worker and Personal Advisor to enable both parties to make an informed decision about whether to proceed with the arrangement. This information should be in written form. See [Appendix 1: Information for Carers Considering Staying Put](#).

Foster Carers who make an early decision that Staying Put will not be an option allows for the child's Social Worker and leaving Care Personal Advisor to make alternative pathway plans with the young person. These alternative plans might include a move to a different fostering household which is able to make a Staying Put arrangement.

Occasionally young people or Foster Carers may change their minds after making an initial decision about Staying Put. The system should always allow both young people and Foster Carers to change their minds about establishing a Staying Put arrangement, but care should be taken to avoid disruption to a young person's education at a critical time.

5. Making a Referral for Staying Put

5.1 For a young person in care

Discussions start at 15 years or earlier, as part of transition planning.

Supervising Social Worker talks to Foster Carer (to ascertain if Staying Put is a consideration). If yes, they inform the child's Social Worker and IRO. There would then be a planning meeting and the Supervising Social Worker would provide all parties with the Staying Put information.

If after this discussion, the Foster Carer is unable to commit to Staying Put then consideration should be given around moving the foster child's arrangement.

The decision is then formalised in the young person's Pathway Plan at the next statutory child in care review. The Pathway Plan is reviewed by IRO within statutory timescales.

6. Setting up a Staying Put Arrangement

6.1 The Agreement

The Staying Put arrangement will be completed together with the young person, Foster Carer, Personal Advisor and Supervising Social Worker.

6.2 Disclosure Baring Service (DBS) Check

Young people remaining with Foster Carers post eighteen will become adult members of the household and will require a valid enhanced DBS check, in households where child in care is living. The Supervising Social Worker for the Foster Carers is responsible for ensuring that the check is completed by the young person's 18th birthday.

7. Monitoring a Staying Put Arrangement

7.1 The Pathway Plan

The young person's Pathway Plan will contain details of the Staying Put arrangement which will include the agreed aims and objectives of the arrangement. It will also list roles and responsibilities of the young person, the carer and Personal Advisor.

7.2 Reviewing the Arrangement

The first review of the Staying Put arrangement will be three months after the young person's 18th birthday (or the start of the arrangement, whichever was more recent). After that, Staying Put Arrangements should be reviewed as part of the Pathway Plan Review (a minimum of every six months.) This should include a review of what is working well and any problems or difficulties that may have emerged.

A review can be arranged earlier by agreement between the young person, former Foster Carers, and the professionals involved.

7.3 Making a Complaint

The complaints and compliments process are exactly the same for Staying Put carers and young people as for any other services run and managed by North Tyneside Council. Please visit our [online complaints page](#) for further information.

See also [How to make a complaint](#)

8. Ending a Staying Put Arrangement

The Staying Put arrangement will end when the young person becomes 21. If a young person will be at a critical time in their education (e.g. final exam period) at the time when they reach 21 years, they will be able to Stay Put until the exam period has finished.

It will be part of the pathway planning process to ensure a young person can move on from Staying Put into suitable accommodation and it is important that planning for this move is done well in advance of their 21st birthday.

The Staying Put arrangement can be ended before the young person's 21st birthday, by the young person or former carer giving relevant notice. The Staying Put agreement allows for the ending of the arrangement with a minimum of 7 days' notice, apart from in exceptional circumstances, where the arrangement can end immediately, and the Police may be involved. Ideally, both parties will give as much notice as possible, and this will usually be 28 days.

It is the expectation that even when Staying Put Arrangements end where appropriate that Foster Carers remain in the lives of the Young Person to continue to give them emotional and practical support as necessary.

9. Reservation Allowances

9.1 Young Person joins the Armed Services

If a young person joins the armed services, the former carer can be paid a reservation allowance of 25% of the Staying Put payment while the young person completes the first 10 weeks of basic training. This is an acknowledgement that within the period of basic training, the young person may decide not to pursue a career within the Armed Forces and may wish to return to the Staying Put carers, whilst they plan their future ETE. Young people are not expected to contribute to the reservation allowance. After the basic training ends, a reservation allowance will not be paid.

Where a young person's room has been kept exclusively for their use, and the young person returns to stay for a period of time, (such as during a period of leave from the Armed Forces), the former carers will be paid at the full current Staying Put rate, for the period of the stay.

9.2 Young Person goes to University

A reservation allowance will not be paid when a young person is living away at university. The Leaving Care Team is paying for the young person's university accommodation.

During breaks from university the former carer will be entitled to the full Staying Put rate if the young person returns to them bedroom during this time.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

10.1 Supervising Social Worker

The supervising Social Worker is responsible for:

- Initiating discussion with Foster Carers about 'Staying Put', to explore their interest.
- Discussing the Foster Carers' decision with the young person's Social Worker, Personal Advisor and relevant Team Managers.
- Continuing to support the Foster Carer, when a fostering arrangement becomes a 'Staying Put' arrangement and there are other young people in their care (CIC); Should the Foster Carer not take any other children into their home and does not wish to resign from fostering at this stage, then supervisory visits may continue which will be set at three monthly intervals, unless there is a specific need for them to be more frequent.
- Ensuring a DBS check is completed for the young person Staying Put, where there is other child in care in the household.
- Identifying and recording the training needs of the former Foster Carer
- Ensuring the former Foster Carer receives information about training courses available to them.

11.3 The Personal Advisor

The Personal Advisor is responsible for:

- Supporting the young person from age 17½ to age 21 or 24 if in higher education.
- Supporting the young person to maximise their entitlement to benefits (Universal Credit), if they are not in employment or are on a low income.
- Supporting the young person to review the pathway plan. The plan will include the Staying Put agreement and state the purpose of the 'Staying Put' arrangement, clearly identifying what needs to be done by when and by whom to enable the young person to be prepared for the next stage of their life. It will be important to consult the Staying Put carer in this process and details of specific support areas and goals will be included in the young person's pathway plan;
- Ensuring that the young person understands the terms of the 'Staying Put' agreement. This may include reinforcing what the young person is expected to purchase from their own income, supporting the young person to apply for relevant funding and benefits.
- Continuing to provide support to the young person throughout the 'Staying Put' arrangement and advising them on pathway finances.

11.4 The Foster Carer

The Foster Carer is responsible for:

- Making an informed decision whether or not to offer a Staying Put arrangement to a young person placed with them.
- Working with the young person to prepare them for future independent living;
- Support the young person to develop skills with money management, planning, preparing and cooking healthy meals and other household tasks.
- Promoting health, healthy lifestyle, positive leisure, education, training and employment;
- Supporting the young person to maintain family time;
- Where the Foster Carer continues to care for other children for North Tyneside Council, alongside a “Staying Put” arrangement, their approval status will remain the same.

Where a Foster Carer does not have space to continue fostering, a discussion must take place between the Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carer about whether they wish to resign from fostering or continue to work with the Fostering Service to keep their registration as a Foster Carer open. Those carers who wish to resign will continue to receive their allowance and fee relevant for the young person in their care.

11.5 The Young Person

The young person is responsible for:

- Engaging in an ETE activity or actively seeking to become engaged in ETE activity;
- Applying for Universal Credit, if not in employment;
- Attending all benefit appointments as required or advised, to support their claim;
- Forwarding any Universal Credit payments, made directly to them, either to North Tyneside Council Pathway Team, or to their carers;
- Working with the carers, to prepare themselves for a future move to be living on their own.

12. Staying Put Finance

Should the Foster Carer choose to undertake a Staying Put Arrangement and not care for any other children requiring Foster Carer then their fee will revert to that of an accredited foster carer, unless prior agreement via the Friends and Family panel, due to that individual young person’s assessed need.

All other relevant child related allowances will continue to be paid for the duration of the Staying Put Arrangement, regardless of whether the Foster Carer continues fostering or not.

13. Legal and Other Implications of Staying Put Arrangements

13.1 Legal Status of a Young Person who is Staying Put

On a young person’s 18th birthday, the legal basis on which they remain living in the household changes as the young person is no longer a child in care. They are now a young adult and a care leaver.

The associated changes from foster child to adult member of the household, and for the carer from Foster Carer to Staying Put carer, should be carefully and sensitively planned in order to ensure that both the young person and the carer understands the nature of the arrangement and that the positive aspects of being in foster care are not diminished by the new legal and financial arrangements.

13.2 Insurance and Staying Put carers

Staying Put carers are covered by North Tyneside Council public liability insurance. Household contents and car insurance are the responsibility of individual carers. Where the Staying Put carers insurance company will not pay out, North Tyneside Council's insurance will seek to offer remuneration.

North Tyneside Foster Carers are covered for legal protection insurance through their membership of Fostering Network, which is paid for by North Tyneside Council. Fostering Network do not provide such cover for Staying Put carers, who must be informed that this legal protection insurance cover does not continue under a Staying Put arrangement.

It is advisable for carers to inform the Insurance Company providing their household insurance when a young person is no longer a fostered child but remaining in their home as an adult lodger, and to check that existing insurance arrangements still provide adequate household cover under this arrangement.

13.3 Tax, National Insurance and Staying Put carers

Foster Carers need to be given information about the income tax and national insurance implications of the Staying Put arrangement. Former carers can no longer use the 'foster care relief' scheme, but

Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs Department (HMRC) have stated that the same arrangements that apply to Adult Placement 'Shared Lives' carers also apply to Staying Put arrangements. That is, that the payments are classed as an allowance and there is a weekly amount that can be received without incurring any tax.

Adult placement / 'Shared Lives' Carers are treated as self-employed for tax purposes and can pay Class 2 National Insurance contributions in order to qualify for basic state pension. Staying Put carers are not able to claim Home Responsibilities Protection to protect basic state pension and other entitlements, as they are caring for an adult, unless they qualify due to their own personal circumstances.

Further information about Tax, Benefits and caring, is available at [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk)

13.4 Welfare Benefits and Staying Put Carers

Carers who are in receipt of welfare benefits, need to seek their own independent advice about whether Staying Put payments will be disregarded or considered as income, for means tested benefits.

13.5 Staying Put Carers who live in rented accommodation

If the carers are tenants themselves, it is advisable for them to check their tenancy agreement and ensure that their lease allows them to have a Staying Put young person.

13.6 Staying Put Carers who have a mortgage

If the carers are mortgage payers it is advisable for them to check whether having a Staying Put young person is within the terms and conditions of their mortgage lender and insurer.

