SSW Pregnancy in a fostering household: the 72 hours

Social Work Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/pregnancy-in-a-fostering-household-the-72-hours/

One-page document for supervising social workers and managers

The clock starts when anyone in the agency becomes aware, by any route. The SSW owns the assessment; the Registered Manager is accountable for sign-off inside 72 clock hours.

Hour 0 — whoever hears

Record what was said, by whom, when and how, on the carer's record the same working day (out of hours: on-call log). Timestamp it — the 72 hours starts here and is never adjusted. Tell the SSW and Registered Manager the same day. Tell no one else.

Same day — RM

Confirm the SSW can complete within 72 hours or allocate cover; the clock does not pause for absence. Open a row on the tracker.

Same day — SSW

Phone the carer. Congratulate, or respond with care. Explain: "There is a short assessment we do with every household when there is a pregnancy — it's about what you and the children might need from us, and it needs to be done within three days." Book the visit. Ask who knows. Read every placed child's file before you go.

By hour 48 — home visit

Carer and partner present. Complete the eight domains in the carer's words: physical demands; infection; aggression and physical intervention; stress and workload; each child placed; safer caring and the home; household capacity and approval; planning for the birth. Rate each green, amber or red; every amber or red gets a specific action, owner and date. Amend the safer care plan (interim is fine). Carer signs.

By hour 60 — SSW

Submit to the Registered Manager with a one-line summary and the time of awareness.

By hour 72 — RM

Read, check against the standard, sign off. Record hours elapsed on the tracker. Any restriction on placements needs your written reasons, a review date and an end date.

Exceptions

Carer away, in hospital or asking for a delay: interim assessment by phone within 72 hours, full visit within ten working days, exception recorded by the RM. Deadline on a weekend or bank holiday: RM may extend to noon the next working day. Workload is never a reason.

Adjustments — in this order

- **How:** hygiene, equipment, routines, travel, safe sleep, de-escalation only.
- **Who:** lifting, personal care and hard moments to the partner; back-up or respite where it can be arranged; family helpers added to the household record.
- **What:** a defined period without new placements, or a narrower profile. RM decision, written reasons, time-limited. A planned move is a last resort, never because of the pregnancy alone.

Support — be honest about it

Think through cover for appointments, the birth and the early weeks, and travel to school and family time. Support where possible; where the agency cannot, record what the carer’s own network will do. Do not promise respite or transport. Explain the fees and allowances position and record that you have.

Review points

- 12 weeks: who is told and how; direct work with children begins. 20–24 weeks: physical demands, wellbeing, matching.
- By 32 weeks: birth-cover plan on file; bedrooms and safe sleep agreed; placing authorities informed in writing.
- Within 5 working days of birth: visit; household updated; safer care plan for a baby in the home. 6–8 weeks: full review; carer’s wishes; household review of approval within three months (panel if

terms change).

- Trigger reviews within 5 working days: complication or medical advice, new referral, incident or allegation, change in a child or the carer’s circumstances, placing-authority request, pregnancy ending, early or multiple birth, carer asks.

Children and placing authorities

Check each child’s history for what makes this news hard — siblings removed at birth, a placement that ended when a baby arrived. Involve the child’s social worker. Record the child’s words. Inform each placing authority in writing at twelve weeks or when the carer agrees, sooner if a risk requires it.

Recording

A life event, not a risk factor attached to the carer. Restricted until she agrees wider sharing. Record the time of awareness, every review, every adjustment with reasons, every conversation with a child or placing authority. Standing supervision item until closure.

The test an inspector will apply

Can the RM show, from the tracker and the file, when the agency knew, what it did within three days, and how the household was kept safe and supported?

For more information read: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Policy.