Respite Procedure

Foster Carer Policies and Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/respite-procedure/

As soon as a Supervising Social Worker becomes aware that a Foster Carer may need respite, they must consult the Positive Aspirations Respite Policy and the Respite Risk Assessment Template.

Introduction

When respite cannot be avoided, the agency's policy is that, whenever possible, the child should be cared for by a familiar and trusted person, ideally the Foster Carer's Enhanced Support already part of their network. The agency asks Foster Carers to avoid requesting respite that lasts longer than 14 days; such respite will normally be agreed only when no other option exists and it clearly serves the child's best interests.

In very unusual situations, where genuinely exceptional circumstances mean a Foster Carer requests respite for 28 days or more, this period will not be treated as respite. It will be regarded as the end of the current placement. The Foster Carers who agree to care for the child during this extended period will be the child's new placement, even if the child is expected to return to the original Foster Carers afterwards. Therefore, no one from the original Foster Carer's support network can provide care for this length of time because an approved Foster Carer is required.
When Foster Carers are unable to make use of their Enhanced Support for respite (from 1 night up to 28 nights), the agency will, whenever possible, identify another agency Foster Carer. Such arrangements will only be made when they meet the child's needs and the child's placing authority has given consent.

This procedure exists to safeguard the Foster Carers, the Enhanced Support or Foster Carer who is providing respite, the agency, and, most importantly, the child or young person. The agency must quickly put the agreed arrangements in place so that the child has a positive, safe, and enjoyable experience while away from their main Foster Carers.

Whatever the circumstances, the Referral Response Officer must be informed and involved as early as possible in the process.

All respite must have authorisation from the local authority before it begins.

Actions for the SSW for the carers of the child/ young person having the respite.

Before any period of care is arranged with anyone other than the main Foster Carers, **the above SSW must:**

1. Discuss with their Team Manager/ Registered manager whether the planned respite is appropriate.
2. Notify the Referral Response Team via email as soon as it is known that the respite is needed.
3. Notify the relevant Supervising Social Worker and Team Manager if the proposed respite family is part of a different social-work team.
4. Notify the Local Authority Social Worker about the proposed respite as soon as possible, and must obtain written permission for it to proceed.
5. Complete a respite risk assessment, which includes the respite checklist, including all statutory checks are in place, send for signing and upload onto the base.
6. Ensure the foster carers for the children to add information to the relevant sections of the respite checklist as part of the respite risk assessment.
7. Review, update and share the young person's Safer Caring Policy and, where relevant Risk Assessment Matrix with:

- The Enhanced Support or Foster Carer providing the respite,
- Their Supervising Social Worker if different from the usual Foster Carer,
- The young person's Local Authority Social Worker

8. Ensure either Enhanced Support or both sets of Foster Carers are aware of the financial arrangements for the respite.

9. Notify the Referral Response Team via email when the respite has started and when the respite has ended.

Actions for the SSW for the Foster carers providing the respite (when different to the SSW for the SSW for the carers of the child/ young person having the respite)

1. The supervising social worker for the carers providing the respite must visit the home where the child is staying during the respite period and, depending on the duration, carry out an unannounced visit. The frequency of this must be detailed in the Respite Risk Assessment.

Actions for the Referral Response Team when the SSW for the carers of the child/young person requesting the respite requires support to identify respite carers.

The Referral Response Officer must:

1. It is the primarily the responsibility of the SSW to identify a respite carer within their teams and not the role of RRT. This should be done through discussions with fellow SSWs and the Team Manager/Registered Manager. If they have not been successful they can reach out to RRT for advice. RRT can also provide advice and guidance around potential vacancies as, where possible, carers being actively matched with should be avoided to minimise bed blocking.
2. If a potential Foster Carer has been identified, they must check whether that Foster Carer is on the vacancy list and confirm their availability to provide respite.

Actions for the Referral Response Team every time respite take place

The Referral Response Officer must:

1. Ensure that the child/ young person's most recent progress summary and referral are sent to the carer providing the respite.
2. Check the Terms of Approval and compliance for the Foster Carer providing the respite.
3. Discuss with RRT Team Manager if there is a need for a change to terms of approval. If this is the case, RRT Team Manager to discuss with relevant Registered Manager and SSW to confirm that this is an acceptable decision and the social work team will then complete the relevant change to terms of approval form.
4. Once a Foster Carer is identified, they must email the following documents to the Local Authority Social Worker and Commissioning Team: Redacted Form F, Carer profile, Welcome book/child friendly profile, Disclosure letter, most recent carer Review and an email with core information including details of:

a. Household make up
b. Availability
c. Experience

d. Any other relevant information

e. Whether room sharing is required

f. Confirmation that costings remain the same as in the main care arrangement

5. Notify the Finance Team of the planned respite so that the correct Foster Carer payments are made. Remember that the weekly fostering fee, including the child allowance, follows the child to the respite placement, and the usual Foster Carer is not paid while the child is on respite because this fee already includes respite.

6. Where relevant, they must obtain concurrent consent for the respite arrangement from the LASW of any other child in placement. If it is difficult to obtain consent, they must liaise with the SSW for the respite carer to help.

7. Actively follow up requests for concurrent consent and formal written consent for respite, and log all emails and telephone calls on the agency's recording systems.

8. Once respite is confirmed, enter it into the Referral Response Team member's diary or calendar.

9. Ensure that the Supervising Social Workers for the Foster Carer providing respite and the main Foster Carer know when respite will take place, and notify the Out-of-Hours Teams of the start and end dates. Record all contacts on agency systems.

10. When the Supervising Social Worker notifies the Referral Response Team that respite has started and ended the referral and response team must record this on agency system including updating the matching form so it is specific to the match with the respite carer. If technical issues occur when moving children and young people internally, ask IT for assistance.

11. All the actions above must be clearly recorded on the agency's dedicated recording systems.

12. At the end of the respite RRT must move the child back and again update the matching.

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Actions for the Referral and Response team when respite is over 28 days

1. On the rare occasions when respite is needed for more than 28 days, it must be treated as a new placement:
2. The Referral Response Officer must update the Local Authority team that oversees placements for children and young people and send Form F and related documents.

3. The Referral Response Officer must input the start and end dates of the placement for the young person, using the agreed dates for the respite to begin and end.

Actions for the SSW for the carers where the child/ young person is now placed

1. Organise a Placement Planning Meeting and complete the Initial Placement Agreement.
2. Complete a new Safer Caring Policy.
3. Complete a 72-hour visit.
4. Continue visits in line with the requirements for children and young people who are newly placed with Foster Carers.

Financial Arrangements

Financial arrangements will be made directly between the main Foster Carer and Enhanced Support, without agency involvement.

When respite is provided by another Foster Carer within the Positive Aspirations Group, the fostering fee and child allowance will be paid directly to the Foster Carer who provides respite. The main Foster Carer will not be paid. A respite allowance was added to the fostering fee some years ago at the request of Foster Carers and should be set aside each week to cover the Foster Carer’s costs if respite is needed.