SSW New Foster Placement Procedure

Social Work Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/ssw-new-foster-placement-procedure/

The Positive Aspirations Group Referral and Referral Response Team are responsible for ensuring that all referrals are carefully and sensitively matched with Foster Carers who are available and suitable to provide a stable and nurturing home. (Please refer to the **SSW Matching Procedure** for full details on the matching process).

When placements are made by the Referral Response Team, Supervising Social Workers (SSWs) must review the referral documentation (where available) or refer to the placement start form which outlines any identified matching concerns. SSWs should contact the Foster Carer promptly to confirm that the child or young person has arrived safely, provide reassurance, and discuss any immediate concerns or identified risks to ensure the emotional and physical safety of all children in the household.

If there are siblings and room-sharing arrangements, the Referral Response Team will complete a **risk assessment** in consultation with the local authority. This must include clear evidence that the views and wellbeing of each child have been considered, with particular attention to emotional safety, consent, and comfort.

SSWs must ensure that the Referral Response Team have been informed that the placement has commenced. Although Foster Carers are expected to notify the team, the SSW should also confirm this (during the day or out of hours) to ensure timely payments and accurate records.

The Referral Response Team Officer will complete the initial matching form thoroughly.
The completed matching form will be quality assured and signed off by the Referral Response Team Manager or Senior Practitioner. This process supports the SSW in preparing for and completing the Initial Placement Agreement (IPA). The form will clearly identify any known or potential risk factors, and how these are being managed collaboratively by the agency, the Local Authority (LA), and the Foster Carer.

The Referral Response Team will complete an **Interim Safe Care Plan (SCP)** based on information shared in the referral. This plan will be replaced by the SSW following the Placement Planning Meeting (PPM).

The Referral Response Team must ensure that any missing key information (such as the child's ID number, allocated child social worker contact details, and referral documents) are followed up promptly with the Commissioning Teams and updated on Base.

Where a need for an emergency clothing grant arises, the SSW should inform the Referral Response Team. However, the grant cannot be confirmed without written authority from the Commissioning Team. Please note that allocated social workers do not have the authority to approve funding requests.

SSWs must make contact with the child's social worker at the earliest opportunity to introduce themselves and arrange a Placement Planning Meeting.

SSWs must visit the placement within **72 hours** of the placement start (including weekends and bank holidays). During this visit, SSWs must:

- Check the fostering bedroom to ensure it is safe, suitable, and welcoming.
- Spend time with the child or young person, giving them space to express how they feel and ensuring they know who they can talk to.
- Follow the prompts within the 72-hour visit template to ensure all areas of safety and wellbeing are reviewed.

A **Placement Planning Meeting** must be held within **7 days (or within the first week)** of placement.

The SSW should complete the agency's initial placement form at this meeting. If the meeting is delayed, the form should be completed on a provisional basis within **48 hours** of the start of placement. The document must be signed by all parties, shared with them, and stored on Base.

The **Initial Placement Agreement (IPA)** must detail any matching considerations and outline any identified gaps or areas requiring support. The IPA discussion should include the completion of the Health Passport and clarify expectations regarding its use.

SSWs must ensure a **child-specific Safer Caring Policy** is completed to identify and address any risks or vulnerabilities. This should be written in collaboration with the Foster Carers and, where appropriate, the child or young person, to support shared understanding and empowerment. The policy must be signed, saved on Base, and copies provided to both the Foster Carers and the Local Authority social worker.

A **Delegated Authority Form** must also be completed and stored on Base.

If relevant documentation is unavailable, the SSW should respectfully request it in writing from the LA social worker, explaining why it is important for the child's care and safety.

The **Child Looked After Care Plan** and any other CLA documentation (including referral forms) should be requested and saved on Base as soon as possible.

The SSW should talk to the newly placed child or young person about their role and reassure them that they are there to listen and support them. The SSW must clearly explain that they can raise any worries or complaints with them directly. Unless the child is a baby, the SSW should go through the **Children's Guide** within a week of placement, using age-appropriate language. The child should sign to confirm they have received it (where appropriate), and if the child is too young or does not understand, the SSW must go through it with the Foster Carer. The signed back page should be stored on Base.

Children and young people should be given the SSW's telephone number and know how to contact them safely. They should also be provided with the agency's key cards.

SSWs must visit Foster Carers and their families at least once every four weeks, alternating between formal supervisions and supervisory home visits (see **SSW Frequency of Visiting Procedure**).

These timeframes represent the **minimum standard** for settled placements. When a child or young person is newly placed, visits should be more frequent, as discussed and agreed with the SSW's line manager.

When a **new Foster Carer** has their first placement, an **Unannounced Visit (UAV)** must be undertaken within eight weeks of the placement starting. This visit offers reassurance to the Foster Family and the child, checks that everyone is managing well, and identifies any additional support needed.

Please note: This UAV is **in addition to** the twice-yearly unannounced visits listed on the SSW task list.

Arrangements for Respite Placements

At times, children will stay with Foster Carers for respite. For example, a child may stay with another Foster Carer within the Positive Aspirations Group for a short period. In such situations, both SSWs must communicate openly and respectfully to plan the respite arrangements.

All respite arrangements must be shared with and approved by the child's placing authority before they occur. The Referral Response Team will liaise with the relevant Local Authority Commissioning Team to obtain written authorisation — **respite cannot proceed without this authorisation**.

Where concurrent consent is required because another child is already in placement, matching must carefully consider the needs and emotional safety of both children or young people. The concurrent consent procedure must be initiated by the Referral Response Team.

Once respite is agreed, the SSWs for both households should share Foster Carer information and facilitate **introductions** between the Foster Carers and the child or young person, helping the child feel informed and supported about the move.

The SSW of the child going into respite should share the child's **Safer Caring Policy** with the respite carer's SSW. The receiving SSW must review and amend the policy as needed to reflect the new household and ensure that risks are clearly understood and safely managed.

When respite begins, the Referral Response Team will record the details on Base. SSWs must notify the team of both the start and end dates of the respite.

The SSW of the Foster Carer providing respite care must visit within **72 hours** of the child's arrival to meet the child, check the environment, and offer support.

If respite lasts longer than **7 days**, the SSW should review the placement with their line manager and decide whether a Placement Planning Meeting is needed. If so, follow the same procedure as for a new placement.

If respite lasts **4 weeks or more**, it will be treated as a placement move. The SSW must liaise with the placing Local Authority and obtain their agreement.