SSW Parent and Child or Baby Specific Assessment Procedure

Social Work Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/ssw-parent-and-child-or-baby-specific-assessment-procedure/

Parent and child arrangements (sometimes referred to as *mother and baby placements*) within The Positive Aspirations Group are an important and growing part of our fostering provision. We are committed to ensuring that both new and already approved Foster Carers are equipped with the knowledge, understanding, and emotional awareness needed to care for and support parent and child placements in a trauma-informed, respectful, and empowering way.

Parent and child arrangements include the placements of adults with their children (usually within the context of care proceedings), or young looked-after parents placed with their own children. This is a specialist area of fostering work, requiring sensitivity to the complex legal status of both parent and child, as well as an understanding of the unique relational dynamics that occur when caring for adults and infants together.

There are occasions where local authorities request parent and child arrangements in which neither the parent nor the baby is looked after. As an agency, we generally avoid entering such agreements due to the complexity of managing safeguarding responsibilities and unclear legal implications. Where exceptional circumstances arise, these must be fully risk-assessed and Referral Response Team Manager will discuss this with the Registered Manager prior to any placement being made.

Caring for a parent and their child, particularly when this forms part of an assessment of parenting capacity within care proceedings, is a significant and specialist responsibility. Such arrangements require Foster Carers to engage in both nurturing and observational roles, to balance compassion with professional curiosity, and to maintain clear, accurate, and objective records.

The Positive Aspirations Group is committed to ensuring that all Foster Carers undertaking parent and child placements receive specialist preparation and ongoing support, including:

- Tailored training focused on trauma-informed parenting support, non-judgmental observation, and the impact of intergenerational trauma.
- Clear guidance around their role boundaries, including how to provide emotional containment, consistent structure, and practical support for parents who may be experiencing stress, anxiety, or fear of failure.
- Opportunities for reflective supervision with their Supervising Social Worker (SSW) and access to therapeutic consultation where needed.

New Foster Carers

During the Form F assessment process, applicants who express an interest in parent and child fostering will have their suitability explored in detail. This includes consideration of:

- Their understanding of trauma and attachment.
- Their capacity to manage the dual needs of parent and infant.
- Their ability to maintain empathy while also providing objective observation and recording.

Where applicants have previous professional experience in health, education, early years, or social care settings, these transferable skills will be fully considered.

As a general principle, the Positive Aspirations Group prefers that carers gain fostering experience prior to being approved for parent and child arrangements. However, if an applicant demonstrates significant relevant skills and emotional resilience, a parenting addendum may be completed as part of their Form F.

All applicants must understand that the agency’s approach to parent and child fostering is underpinned by trauma-informed principles — prioritising respect, empowerment, and collaboration with the parent, while maintaining the safety and welfare of the child.

Approved Foster Carers (including those currently caring for parent and child placements)

Approved Foster Carers who are identified as suitable for parent and child fostering must alongside the five mandatory training courses, complete two extra mandatory training courses. They must be refreshed every 3 years. The Positive Aspirations Group’s Parent and Child Training is part of their

ongoing professional development.

1. Parent and Child and Baby Specific Safeguarding
2. Parent and Child and Baby Specific Child Development

The above training would include:

- Understanding trauma and its impact on parenting capacity.
- Supporting parents through observation, guidance, and empathy rather than control.
- Balancing the dual role of support and assessment while maintaining fairness and dignity.
- Managing emotional responses and preventing compassion fatigue.

A suitably qualified and experienced social worker will complete a short specialist assessment (Parent and Child Addendum). This can be presented to Panel either as part of a Form F update or within a Foster Carer Review. Once approved, the addendum is appended to the Foster Carer's Form F and shared with local authorities considering parent and child placements.

This assessment evidences the Foster Carer's suitability, skills, and emotional capacity to undertake parent and child fostering and demonstrates their commitment to trauma-informed and relational care.

Requirements

•Alongside the five mandatory training courses Foster Carers must complete two extra mandatory training courses. They must be refreshed every 3 years:

1. Parent and Child and Baby Specific Safeguarding
2. Parent and Child and Baby Specific Child Development

• At least one carer must be available full-time to ensure consistent emotional presence and supervision.
• Foster Carers must demonstrate strong record-keeping skills, completing comprehensive, factual, and balanced recordings using the agency's core template or that of the local authority.
• Foster Carers must be prepared to provide temporary care for the baby if the parent is unable to do so, ensuring that this is handled with empathy and in consultation with the SSW.

• Foster Carers must understand they may be asked to give evidence in court and will be supported by the SSW and agency in preparing for this.
• Foster Carers must understand that if the outcome of court proceedings is separation, they are expected to continue caring for the baby (or parent) until an alternative care pathway is identified, ensuring stability and minimising further trauma.
• Foster Carers will receive regular reflective supervision to explore the emotional impact of this work and to ensure their own wellbeing and resilience are supported as well as any impact on other household members and children placed with the Foster Family.