SSW Placement End Reflection Procedure

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

(Last reviewed 02/05/2025 – Trauma-Informed Edition)

Children and young people move on from foster placements for many different reasons, including rehabilitation, adoption, reunification, transition to independence, or in some cases, unplanned endings. Each transition represents a significant moment in a child's journey and can also have an emotional impact on the fostering household. The **placement end reflection** process is an important opportunity to understand experiences, promote learning, and support emotional wellbeing for everyone involved.

The aims of the placement end reflection are to:

• **Consider the child's experiences and relationships** within the placement, and explore together the reasons why the placement ended. If the placement ended in disruption, reflection offers a safe space for Foster Carers to consider the circumstances that led to the breakdown and to think about what support or approaches might help in future. This is not about blame, but about shared learning and understanding.

• **Identify learning and development needs** that have arisen during the placement. Training and reflective learning are ongoing parts of fostering practice, and the reflection process supports Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers (SSWs) to recognise new learning needs that may strengthen future placements.

• **Celebrate successes and achievements** within the placement. The reflection provides an opportunity to recognise what went well, the progress the child made, and the Foster Carer's role in helping achieve positive outcomes. Reflecting on these achievements helps reinforce resilience, confidence, and pride in the fostering role.

• **Acknowledge and support emotional responses** following a placement ending. When a child leaves, it is normal for Foster Carers and household members to experience feelings of loss or transition. The reflection process creates a supportive space to explore these emotions and ensure

Foster Carers and their families feel heard, valued, and supported.

• **Integrate learning from allegations or safeguarding incidents**, where applicable. In cases where a placement ended due to an allegation, the reflection will include consideration of recommendations from panel and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), and how these are being implemented. Reflective work in these circumstances should take place **after** the investigation has concluded to ensure fairness and emotional safety for all involved.

• **Support improved matching and future placements.** Information and insights gained from the reflection process will help the agency identify strengths, areas of growth, and any support needs to inform future matching decisions and ensure carers feel confident and prepared.

• **Recognise individual impact.** Every placement affects each household differently. Some placements may have little impact, while others may be deeply emotional. In cases where minimal reflection is needed, this should still be noted respectfully, with acknowledgement of the carers' experience and confirmation that no additional training or matching considerations were identified.

Placement end reflection will not be required for the following:

1. Respite placements
2. Placements lasting fewer than 10 days (unless the ending was unplanned)
3. Overnight stays

Procedures for Supervising Social Workers:

• The SSW will complete the reflective work **in person** with the Foster Carer using the agency's **placement reflection template** on Base.

• The SSW must complete and submit the reflection report within **4 weeks** of the placement ending, to be reviewed and signed off by the Team Manager.

• Any identified actions, training, or support needs must be followed up by the SSW and recorded clearly in the Foster Carer's supervision records and training plan.

• While the reflection template includes prompts to guide discussion, the SSW must also **actively listen** and adapt to the Foster Carer's narrative. Carers should be encouraged to explore experiences

that were most meaningful or impactful to them and their family.

• When a child leaves a placement, the experience can affect the whole household. The SSW must allow **time, space, and emotional safety** for everyone in the home to explore their thoughts and feelings about the ending and their readiness for future fostering.

• The reflection must be carried out **sensitively and respectfully**, ensuring privacy for all participants and acknowledging individual emotional responses. It may be appropriate to meet with carers and children (both fostered and birth children) separately to ensure they can speak freely.

• If the reflection session is not completed within 4 weeks, an **automated reminder email** will be sent to the SSW and Team Manager to prompt completion.

Emotional Safety and Support Principles:

• Approach all reflection discussions with curiosity, empathy, and a focus on emotional safety.
• Use **trauma-informed communication**—acknowledge emotions without judgement, validate experiences, and help carers identify both challenges and strengths.
• Recognise that endings can trigger past losses for both children and carers; ensure that SSWs monitor for ongoing emotional impact and signpost to support if needed.
• Encourage carers to engage in **self-care and reflective supervision** after the reflection session.