

Norfolk Fostering Service Matching Policy and Procedure

Policy statement

Children's Services will ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting the child's assessed need. The care plan will set out how any additional needs will be addressed and suitable support will be provided to ensure that all of the child's needs are met.

Policy status

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act Guidance and regulations Vol 2
- National Minimum Standards 2011
- Care Planning and case review Regulations 2010

Key Points

1. The service maintains a vacancy list and this is organised on the basis of panel approval e.g. three age bands 0-5, 5-11 and 11-8 and by the type of offer, e.g. emergency, bridge, task centered as agreed by foster carer and service.
2. The Matching of children to appropriate carers is based on information given in the Placement request profile, the child's care plan and recent written assessments of the child and the carers.
3. Long term matching must only be on a planned basis and should be done via a matching meeting.
4. Matching should always be achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant parties where possible and appropriate. Children should be matched with an appropriate foster carer capable of meeting their needs. They should feel welcomed into the foster home, treated and valued as a member of the family, and included in the everyday life of the family. They should in due course, leave a placement in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel valued.
5. The law requires that when making a specific foster placement the Social worker must be satisfied that fostering is the best way to meet their duties towards the child and that it is the most appropriate placement in the circumstances.

6. If there are already children placed with the foster carer then consent of their social worker has to be obtained before the making of a new placement to ensure that the needs of all the children of the household are taking into consideration and if necessary additional supports are identified to support a placement. Standards 15.1 make it clear that a placement should not be proposed unless it can be reasonably expected to meet the Childs' assessed needs and the impact on the other children has been considered.
7. Unless an emergency placement makes it impossible children should be given information about the foster carers before arrival. This may include access to photographic information if available. This information needs to be in a format appropriate to their age and understanding.
8. Where ever possible children are able to visit the foster home and talk to the carers prior to a placement decision being made.

Standards

1. Placement decisions should take account of the child's views in light of her/his age and understanding and, where appropriate the views of the child's family.
2. Placement decisions consider the child's educational needs as a priority.
3. Placement decisions should consider the child's assessed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, race, religion, culture and language of the foster carers.
4. The assessed developmental needs of the child in relation to gender, disability and sexuality should match as closely as possible to the assessed skills, knowledge, family and social circumstances of the foster carers.
5. Positive efforts are made to recognise and reward any family or friends of the child that may provide an appropriate placement and, where required, meet the approval requirements of a foster carer.
6. Priority is given to keeping siblings together unless to do so would damage the welfare of the children.
7. Trans-racial and trans-cultural placements should be provided with extra support, including additional training carers as needed so that the child is able to develop and maintain a positive understanding of their cultural heritage.
8. Placements outside of the carers approval status, or that exceed the usual fostering limit of three children, can only be made after an exemption is granted by the operations manager.
9. In an emergency a child can be placed with a foster carer outside of their terms of approval but for a maximum of 6 working days. This is only allowed exceptionally in unforeseen circumstances and not as an alternative to making appropriate plans.

Each child, where possible, should be given the opportunity of a period of introductions to a proposed foster placement so that she or he can express their views about the placement and become familiar with the carer, the carers family, pets and the neighbourhood before moving in.

The information needed by the foster carer has to be provided before the placement is made although it is expected that when an emergency placement is made it may have to be given at the time of the placement. In exceptional circumstances when the fostering service does not have all of the information even at the time of the placement in a case like this it must be provided as soon as possible and within 5 working days.

Procedure

Number	Task	Responsible officer	Record	Timescale
1	Emergency, task centred placements are recorded	Supervising worker		Immediately once placement is agreed
2	Long term placements are matched only in a planned way via a matching meeting	Team Managers for child and carer	Minutes of Matching meeting	
3	Placements that exceed the usual fostering limit must be authorised by the Operational Manager for Fostering	Carer's supervisor worker/Operational manager	Exemptions certificate Logged on Shared drive Letter to carers	Immediately once placement is identified and before placement is agreed