



Children's visit within the Fostering Service – Policy and Practice Guidance

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Fostering Services Regulations (FSR 2011):

Independent fostering agencies—duty to secure welfare

11. The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—

(a) the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times, and

(b) before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child's—

(i) wishes and feelings (having regard to the child's age and understanding), and

(ii) religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

16. Education, employment and leisure activities

(4) The fostering service provider must ensure that foster parents promote the leisure interests of children placed with them.

18 Independent fostering agencies – representations and complaints

18.—(1) Subject to paragraph (7), the registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must establish a written procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children placed by the agency, and by foster parents approved by the agency.

(5) The registered person must ensure that—

(a) children are enabled to make a complaint or representation, and

(b) no child is subject to any reprisal for making a complaint or representation.

National Minimum Standards (NMS 2011):

STANDARD 1 – The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them.

1.1) Children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, unless this is contrary to their interests or adversely affects other members of the foster care household.

1.2) Children understand how their views have been taken into account and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why.

Children's visit within the Fostering Service – Policy and Practice Guidance

- 1.3) Children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support.
- 1.4) The views of the child are sought regularly on the child's care (unless in individual cases this is not appropriate).
- 1.7) The wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service.

STANDARD 10 - Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child.

Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

10.5) The foster home is inspected annually, without appointment, by the fostering service to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children.

10.6) In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider takes into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision-making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed.

Visit at point of placement

All children should be visited by their allocated SSW **within three working days** of moving into their new foster placement which would usually coincide with the Placement Planning Meeting (PPM) taking place.

Ongoing visits

All children placed within NCT's Independent Fostering Service must be seen regularly by their allocated SSW. This is outside of any consideration of the visits to children undertaken by their allocated children's social worker, Independent Reviewing Officer or court appointed Guardian.

When Children are placed short term with carers the Carer must be visited every 4 weeks and child must be visited every 8 weeks as a minimum.

When Children have been in placement with their carers for over a year the Carer can be visited every 6 weeks as a minimum and child can be visited 12 weeks as a minimum. The child/ young person does not need to have been formally matched to the carers at this stage but there does need to be an agreement between the supervising social worker and their line manager that the visits can be reduced, and this decision will be based on a range of issues such as placement stability and complexity of need. This decision needs to be recorded in case-based supervision between the Practice Manager and the supervising social worker.

Children's visit within the Fostering Service – Policy and Practice Guidance

Connected carers are formally matched with the children and young people in placement so carers can be visited every 6 weeks and children, and young people can be visited every 12 weeks as a minimum. As above, these visits are the minimum and should be increased if there are any indicators of placement instability and/or if the carer would benefit from increased levels of support.

Children should be seen on their own where they are comfortable to do so and their 'wishes and feelings' sought. Where children are not happy to speak with their allocated SSW or, with very young children, may not be able to verbalise their feelings, then the SSW will need to be creative in finding a way of seeking a sense of how a child feels about living with their foster carers. This may include playing a game with a child, or, for very young children only, observing them with their foster carers where you would expect to see the child seeking out comfort and reassurance from their foster carer. Further approaches can be used to engage children in a discussion through play, where appropriate, such as using the Three houses model or the Worry Monster.

When meeting with a child in the foster home, SSWs should always endeavour to speak to the children in their bedroom, again only when the child is happy to do so and would expect to see a bedroom that reflects both the age and interests of the child. The bedroom needs to be decorated to a high standard and have plenty of room for a child or young person to play and study.

Recording the visits

When children are seen, this should always be recorded both within the foster carers' Carefirst records and within the child's 'running record' for the Fostering Service within TEAMS. Once fully written up, the date that each child has been seen should be recorded to the Compliance tracker and reviewed within individual SSWs' supervisions.

A rag rating system is applied to the foster carers' compliance tracker, indicated by **AMBER** at six week intervals between children's visits and **RED** for eight week intervals between children's visits. The frequency of visits to children being undertaken should be monitored both within individual SSWs' supervision with their line manager and within the monthly Performance clinics.

It is NOT sufficient to simply record 'CHILD SEEN'. There must be context to the visit and the conversation that was had with the child, **primarily evidencing what the child is saying about living with their foster carers and any other feedback, concerns or worries a child may want to raise**. If a child is presenting as if they are about to make a disclosure or share a concern with you, NEVER promise to keep this a secret, stating that you may need to share whatever they are about to tell you in order to make sure that they can be kept safe.

NCT's Fostering Service is committed to ensuring that our reporting and recording **is written to the child**, always being mindful that the children of today may request to read their files as young adults.

Practice Examples:

1)What's working well

Children Seen: Yes.



Children's visit within the Fostering Service – Policy and Practice Guidance

X (the child) informed that what he likes about living with C and B (the carers) is family meetings. They have a family planner on the fridge that tells him who is where and what is happening each day. He enjoys the pocket money chart whereby he can earn money for chores and C and B are 'technically organised.' They have got 'bringing laundry down days' He has to complete doodle Maths and English and he gets pocket money every time he does.

What are you proud of?

B and C are proud of how well X has settled and the fact that he wants to stay....He is really good with the dogs. X said he really likes animals.

Scaling question:

At the moment X would rate it (the placement) as an 8/9, as everyone is nice and C and B listen to his opinion. It does not mean it will always happen, but it has been heard.

2) CHILD SEEN - H I came to see you with N after school. N opened the door and was holding you. You were making a long sound. I wondered whether you were pretending to bark like the dog, but you said no silly. I asked what a dog would sound like, and you barked and laughed and then wanted to get down from N. We went into the living room, and I said that I had come to talk to H. You said that you wanted to play barbies so I suggested that we do my choice first and then we could play barbies. I showed you the photo's that D had printed off in your special book. I said who was in each photo. When I showed you the photo of N and R's house, you told me it was your house. When I showed you the photos of your new school you told me it wasn't. So, I decided to read you a story that I have written all about H moving house. As I read the story to you, I held up the picture it was about. You listened really well to the story and added bits to it. When I said H likes the colour pink you told me you like purple as well but not black and brown.

Visit following a disclosure or a complaint

In addition to the requirement for allocated SSWs to undertake visits to children in their foster placement within an eight week cycle, whenever a child has made a disclosure or a complaint (necessitating a Schedule 7 Notification to OFSTED to be completed) or has been significantly unwell, (necessitating a Schedule 6 Notification to be completed), children should be seen by their allocated SSW within the next working day. If the SSW's availability will cause a significant delay in this visit taking place, the allocated PM will be required to undertake this.

Visits for ending placement

Wherever possible, SSWs should undertake a visit to children at the point that their current foster placement is ending to support a positive transition experience for children and seek their views through their 'wishes and feelings' as to their current fostering placement ending and the arising circumstance of this.

Response to concerns from visits

Children's visit within the Fostering Service – Policy and Practice Guidance

Any concerns that may arise from these discussions need to be escalated with the SSW's line manager and the foster carer spoken to directly about these as and when appropriate to do so, noting any immediate safeguarding concerns raised will require an immediate response and appropriate notifications under Schedule 6 'Matters to be Monitored' and Schedule 7 'Matters to be Notified' (FSR 2011) considerations.

References:

[The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

[Fostering Guidance - MASTER \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[The Three Houses templates – Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](https://socialworkerstoolbox.com)

[Free social work resources & tools for direct work with children and adults \(socialworkerstoolbox.com\)](https://socialworkerstoolbox.com)

[The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

[Layout 1 \(basw.co.uk\)](https://www.basw.co.uk) - '10 Ten Top Tips' – Recording in children's social work