



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Family, Friends and Fostering Service

Supervision and support of foster carers practice guidance

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

Supervision & support of carers

1 Introduction

This document sets out the local practice and procedures for supervising social workers who are supervising and supporting foster carers and should be read together with the *Supervision and support of foster carers* policy.

[Supervision and Support of Foster Carers](#)

2 Allocation of supervising social workers

- Once a foster carer has been approved by the Agency Decision Maker, the Family, Friends and Fostering manager should allocate a supervising social worker to the foster carer and record this in the Approved Foster Carer Visit episode on MOSAIC.
- When considering allocation, the manager should take into account the caseloads held by supervising social workers and ensure that each worker holds the same number of cases representing a wide range of carers, for example newly-approved and established carers, long-term and Family link carers.
- The manager may also take into account any area of expertise of a particular worker and may match foster carers to a supervising social worker with a similar cultural background where this is appropriate and possible.
- When a social worker has been assigned to supervise a foster carer, they should read through the foster carer's file, particularly the Form F assessment report, to try to find out as much information about the foster carer's strengths and weaknesses and any areas of concern that may need to be explored or requiring extra advice, support or training.
- The supervising social worker should also take into account any special needs of the foster carer, for example whether an interpreter needs to be present during the visit to facilitate communication.

3 Standards of support

- Supervising social workers need to build a good relationship with the foster carers they supervise that is based on openness and honesty and being accessible and responsive to foster carer's needs and support their caring role.

Supervision & support of carers

- Newly qualified foster carers will require support to prepare them for placement, whereas more experienced foster carers may require support to deal with circumstances arising from difficult placements.
- Lone carers may require help in managing their support network, and carers who work may need help in balancing work commitments with their caring role.
- Foster carers should be clear as to their role and responsibilities and those of the supervising social worker from the outset. Supervising social workers should ensure that foster carers are aware of the standards and expectations required of them and what they may expect from the Fostering Service in terms of support.
- Supervision should be a two-way process based on an open discussion of issues, allowing foster carers to state their views. Where there are any disagreements, these should be noted in the record of the visit.
- Supervising social workers and foster carers should also be aware that the needs of the child are paramount, and that the welfare of the child will be their primary concern even though they do not hold direct case responsibility.
- Most supervisory and support work will take place during scheduled visits to the foster carer, but the supervising social worker should be available for the foster carer to contact in the event of any emergency during office hours.

4 Visits

- Supervising social workers should visit foster carers at least once a month to 6 weeks depending on need, but visits may be more frequent if requested by the foster carer.
- On allocation, the social worker should contact the foster carer as soon as possible to introduce themselves and arrange the first visit. It is recommended that visits are scheduled as far in advance as possible.
- If a supervising social worker or a foster carer needs to cancel a visit, they should give notice of this as soon as possible and re-schedule the meeting to be held within a week. Reasons for cancelling the visit and the date of the re-scheduled visit should be recorded on MOSAIC.

Supervision & support of carers

- Supervising social workers and foster carers may sometimes decide there is a need to meet more frequently because of problems or concerns arising from a particular placement or because the foster carer is struggling with their role and responsibilities and is failing to meet standards.
- This should be discussed between them and brought to the attention of the team manager. A strategy should be agreed on for increasing support including frequency of visits. This should be notified to the foster carer and recorded on MOSAIC.
- All supervisory visits should be recorded on the record of supervisory visit form in the Approved Foster Carer Visit episode on MOSAIC. The record should be sent to the manager or senior via the task for authorisation.
- The team manager should authorise the visit and this will generate the next scheduled visit on MOSAIC.
- Unannounced visits should be recorded on the record of supervisory visits form but should state clearly that the visit was unannounced. The form should be passed to the team manager for comment and authorisation via the task on MOSAIC.
- Where there are concerns arising from an unannounced visit, the supervising social worker and the team manager should meet to discuss these and decide what action needs to be taken.

5 Joint working with the child's social worker

- Supervising social workers should work closely with the child's social worker to ensure the child's needs are being met and that the care they are receiving is supporting the care plan.
- When allocated to supervise a foster carer or when an allocated foster carer has a child placed with them, the supervising social worker should make contact with the CLA social worker to discuss how to put joint working into practice. This should cover:

Supervision & support of carers

- sharing any relevant information about the child, the foster carer and the placement
 - attending any meetings relating to the child and the placement, including placement agreement meetings, statutory reviews, disruption meetings and child protection case conferences
 - arranging joint visits
 - planning any work required to implement the care plan
 - making decisions about the suitability of the placement.
- Supervising social workers should arrange to visit the foster placement with the child's social worker at least once between each statutory review or as agreed at the child's statutory review meeting where there is a need to increase the frequency of joint visits due to circumstances arising from the placement.
 - The supervising social worker should also inform the foster carer of the dates and explain the purpose of the visit.
 - The purpose of the joint visit is to discuss the implementation of the child's care plan with the foster carer and ensure that agreed actions are being carried out. The visit should also focus on whether the standard of care provided is meeting the child's identified needs and helping them to achieve good outcomes.
 - The visit should look at what progress has been made regarding desired outcomes and what further action may be needed by the foster carer to fully implement:
 - the child's care plan
 - the child's health plan
 - the child's Personal Education Plan
 - agreed contact arrangements
 - where applicable, any work to prepare the child for permanence or independence.

Supervision & support of carers

6 Other support

Out of hours support

- Foster carers are likely to experience emergency situations in the evenings and at weekends when the main office is shut. Supervising social workers should make them aware of the role of Camden's Emergency Duty Team and how to make referrals to the team out of office hours.
- It is important especially that foster carers report any unauthorised absence from placements overnight or at weekends to the team in line with the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership missing children protocol.
- <https://cscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CSCP-missing-protocol-2023.pdf>
- As foster carers are members of the Fostering Network, they may also use their Fosterline.

Support groups and peer support

- Support groups provide an opportunity for foster carers to meet with their peers in order to share experiences and knowledge and offer support. Supervising social workers should encourage foster carers to join these groups wherever possible.
- Foster carers may join the following support groups:
 - the Fostering Service's own support group
 - the Camden Association of Foster Carers
 - the Fostering Network
 - the North London Fostering Consortium.
- All groups provide support and enable foster carers to discuss any issues affecting them and offer carers a chance to discuss issues with senior managers who are responsible for the Fostering Service.
- Support groups can also provide a forum for professionals from specialist services to deliver presentations to foster carers about their work and how they can support foster carers in their caring role.

Supervision & support of carers

- The Fostering Service also offers a mentoring programme that matches newly-approved foster carers with more experienced carers who are able to provide advice and guidance around the fostering task based on their own experiences of fostering for Camden.
- This should be arranged by the supervising social worker and the Fostering manager, who will identify an appropriate foster care mentor and arrange financial support where necessary.

Support from the professional network

- The supervising social worker has a specific responsibility for enabling foster carers to link with all professionals working with the child, and they should work with the child's social worker to facilitate access to other resources needed to meet the child's needs.
- The child's social worker should always ensure that all members of the child's professional network are aware of the placement and have the foster carer's details.
- The child's social worker will generally be responsible for ensuring that the child is in receipt of universal and specialist services and should involve the foster carer in any arrangements to secure services.

Short breaks from caring

- Occasionally, foster carers may request a short break from caring either for a weekend or longer if they are planning a holiday. Respite can be offered by a carer's nominated back up carer or another Camden foster carer who is known to the child.
- Supervising social workers need to be involved in making any arrangements, and a meeting held to discuss any issues that may arise. The child's social worker should be invited to this meeting in order to give their views.
- For breaks that are longer than a weekend, nominated carers will be subject to a backup assessment and an unannounced visit to the back-up carers will be carried out during the respite period.
- Details of any short break arrangements must be recorded on the child's and the foster carer's MOSAIC record.

Supervision & support of carers

Support for placements at risk of breakdown

- Camden's policy is to maintain CLA in stable placements where they are able to develop good attachments and positive relationships with foster carers who are able to carry out the corporate parenting role and advocate for the child. Placement stability is a key factor in enabling CLA to achieve good outcomes and Camden aims to ensure that placement moves are kept to a minimum and only endorsed by a statutory review where this is in the child's interest.
- To avoid placement breakdown, CLA social workers and supervising social workers will work with foster carers to look at issues and identify any support and services that can strengthen the placement. In some cases, the child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) may convene a risk of breakdown planning meeting to facilitate this.

Provision of information

- Supervising social workers should ensure that foster carers have access to all Camden's policies relating to fostering, looked after children and child protection, as well as contact details for the Family, Friends and Fostering Service, CLA service and other relevant agencies.
- CLA social workers should ensure that foster carers have copies of relevant care planning documents such as care plans, placement plan agreements, copies of relevant court orders and parent-held records such as health records, appointments, passports etc.