



Supervision, Support and Training of Foster Carers

All approved Foster Carers will have an allocated and suitably qualified Placement Manager who is responsible for supervising and supporting them, ensuring they have the necessary guidance, support and direction to provide a quality service. This will include an understanding of the requirement to work within the legislation relating to fostering, the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and the policies, procedures and practice guidance of AFA.

It is the Social Worker for the child or children in the placement who holds responsibility for giving specific advice or support relating to the child, in line with the Care Plan and Placement Agreement/Plan. The Placement Manager will work alongside the Child's Social Worker to assist them in ensuring that the child's needs are well understood and that appropriate support and guidance is in place for the Foster Carers to meet the child's needs. The overriding responsibility of these roles and of all members of the team around the child is to ensure that children are safe and well.

The Placement Manager must also ensure that the Foster Carers' training and development needs are identified and met. For newly approved carers this includes completing the Training, Support and Development Standards which must be completed in the first year of their registration. They also have the responsibility to ensure Foster Carers are familiar and made aware of new policies and guidance.

Planned Supervision Visits

The frequency of supervision visits should be agreed between the Foster Carer and the Placement Manager and endorsed by the relevant Line/Team/Registered Manager at the time of the Foster Carer's approval. The rate that these will be held will be flexible to the changing needs of carers and those they care for but should be a minimum of monthly (see below).

Supervision is a supportive and enabling two-way process to:

- Enable Foster Carers to contribute effectively to the plans for the children for whom they are caring
- Provide appropriate monitoring and feedback on the Foster Carers' work to ensure National Minimum and Fostering Regulations are met and followed
- Complete Personal Development Plans with each carer, which are linked to their training and annual review
- Support Foster Carers by providing advice or guidance, as appropriate
- Assist Foster Carers to reflect on and learn from their experience, helping them to consider how best to approach the care of children they look after
- Give Foster Carers an opportunity to raise any concerns and make sure they are addressed appropriately
- Acknowledge the challenges and demands that the fostering task makes on foster families and ensure appropriate support is available

- Recognise and address any difficulties in relation to fostering that the carers' own children may be experiencing
- Support Foster Carers to work in an anti-discriminatory way that respects and promotes individual differences.

The agenda for each supervision meeting should cover:

- Personal issues, including the effect of a child in placement on the Foster Carer and their own family
- Child/ren in placement, their progress as well as any areas of concern; their health, cultural, educational, leisure, support needs and any delegated authority issues arising
- Safer caring, health and safety, any risks or CSE issues arising
- Matters arising from the last supervision including the progress of actions previously agreed
- Training/development issues for the Foster Carers and their family including reflection on the impact of training attended
- Foster Carer's recording and any other statutory checks such as savings checks, bedroom checks etc.

Whenever possible, visits should be completed face-to-face. However, there may be some circumstances where a virtual visit is necessary. These should only take place following discussion with or direction from AFA management.

Supervision visits should be recorded on a Foster Carer Supervision Record on Charms and shared with the Foster Carer. Placement Managers should email the Foster Carer following supervision to confirm the actions that have been agreed. Carers should be asked to digitally sign the supervision record on Charms, and this will inform the Foster Carer's Annual Review (see Review of Foster Carers policy).

Frequency of Supervision and Other Contacts

Supervision meetings will take place at least once every month with additional visits as agreed between the Placement Manager and the Foster Carer. There will also be weekly contact, which can be held more frequently if needed. This may take place via telephone calls, text messages, email etc. A Foster Carer should be supported to give their view as to what type of regular contact they would prefer. The ongoing level of contact will alter for each carer at different times and will be in place as required for all those working to support the carer and child.

Foster Carers will be provided with information about the support available from the Agency outside of office hours, including the contact details of Senior Managers.

Foster Carers will also have contact with their Placement Manager at other times, for example, in meetings relating to the children in their care. There may also have contact with other Agency staff in between supervision visits.

Unannounced Visits

There should be unannounced visits at least once a year and AFA aims to complete two visits a year to each carer. In some circumstances, these may need to be completed virtually. However, as there are clear limitations to virtual visits, these should be used only in exceptional circumstances, and following the direction of AFA's management. The main purpose of the unannounced visit will be to look at the home environment. One unannounced visit will be undertaken by the carers' Placement Manager and the second will be carried out by another member of staff (on a rota basis) who will need to check:

- Who is in the home
- Who is looking after the child
- If the carer is not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the child

If the Foster Carers are not at home, but the child is present and being looked after by someone else, the Social Worker should check the identity of that person and not continue with the visit.

Unannounced visits should be recorded. There should not be a regular programme of unannounced visits without there being a specific reason, for example if a Foster Carer is being closely monitored and in such an event the reason should be explained to them.

Support Provided by the Placement Manager and other AFA Staff

Placement Managers should ensure they offer responsive support to carers, which ensures that the needs of children in their care are being met. They have a role in matching potential placements as well as supporting children already in a placement. The Placement Manager must ensure that a carer is given appropriate supervision and encouraged to reflect on events, the child(ren)'s needs and to look at their training and development needs. It is important that they are sensitive and supportive but remain objective and feel able to challenge a carer if required.

Support is also available for all carers in the absence of their Placement Manager, either from supervisory staff, the Registered Person, Specialist Services or Team Manager or other Placement Managers. AFA's out of hours' service also allows carers to have direct contact with a qualified worker at any time of the day or night.

The Placement Manager will support and assist the carer in liaising and working with other professionals including the team around the child. They should maintain good contact with the Social Worker and other key professionals for any child placed, ensuring that the needs of the child remain paramount at all times. They should also engage in any professionals or other meetings relating to the child or carer, as appropriate.

It is the Placement Manager's role to ensure that the carer is meeting all of the Agency's expectations as outlined in the Foster Carer Handbook and Foster Carer Agreement. This means that the Placement Manager must ensure that carers are undertaking all of their professional responsibilities alongside providing a high standard of care to the children placed with them.

It is also the Placement Manger's role to ensure that appropriate checks and reviews are carried out in a comprehensive and timely fashion.

The Placement Manager also has ongoing contact with any children looked after by the Foster Carers, to ensure their wellbeing. They will meet with the child on a regular basis and see them alone too. Children will be provided with contact details for the Agency as part of their Children's Guide and Welcome Box information.

Further information relating to the responsibilities of Placement Managers can be found in the Placement Managers Guidance.

Support Groups and Participation Meetings are arranged regularly to allow carers to access support as and when required. Support Groups also provide carers with an opportunity to obtain and offer support to and from one another while developing their skills.

Role of the Placement Manager if Allegations are made against a Foster Carer

For detailed procedures, see Managing Allegations Against Staff and Foster Carers Procedure.

If allegations regarding the care or safeguarding of a child are made, and an investigation is to take place, a Manager/Placement Manager other than those allocated to the Foster Carer will carry out the investigation. However, the Foster Carers' allocated Placement Manager should:

- Continue to support the family on a day to day basis
- Assist the carers by sharing written information about the support available from AFA or independent sources
- Make the carer/s aware of the process and their rights during an investigation

Training

As well as induction training, AFA will provide training to support all newly approved Foster Carers to complete the TSD Standards for Foster Care.

There will be an ongoing review of the previous training provision that has been provided and from this a comprehensive training package will be put in place throughout the year. The carer's needs as well as any requests for specific training courses from carers or staff will be considered on an ongoing basis and incorporated within the programme. Foster Carers are notified of the training programme on a quarterly and ongoing basis and as part of this, their personal development will be kept under review to identify training and learning needed to develop their skills and knowledge, as discussed during supervision and in annual reviews.

The Agency has expectations in terms of the minimum level of training to be attended by carers both pre and post approval. This is outlined in the training and learning guidance. Carers should be supported by their Placement Manager to access training, both directly from AFA and from other sources, including online, virtual or one-to-one training.

Training needs will also be assessed and considered throughout the year, particularly at the point of a new placement being made, a significant change taking place for any of the children in placement or if an allegation is made (see Placement Managers guidance for more detail).

Access to a range of books, DVDs and resources to support professional development will also be made available to carers.

Connected Policies or Guidance

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Expectations of Foster Carers Behaviour	Foster Carers, Placement Managers and Senior staff
Foster Carers Handbook	Foster Carers and Placement Managers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Management of Allegations Against Staff and Carers	Foster Carers and Placement Managers
Training and Learning Guidance	All staff and Foster Carers
Placement Manager Guidance	Placement Managers, Senior staff

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