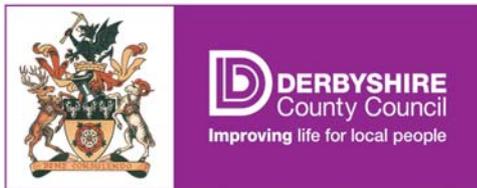


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Derbyshire Children and Younger Adults Department

Amendments to the Foster Carer Handbook (2011)

Vision Statement: all children, young people and their families have the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect them.

In April 2011, the new National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Children's Homes, Fostering and Adoption Services, and associated Regulations and Guidance, came into force. This is a guide summarising the key changes that emanate from the following Regulations, Guidance and National Minimum Standards:

- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Care Planning Regulations) and Associated Guidance
- The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and Associated Guidance
- The Children's Homes (Amendment) Regulations 2011, Associated Guidance (Volume 5) and National Minimum Standards (NMS)
- The Fostering Agencies Regulations 2011, Associated Guidance (Volume 4) and National Minimum Standards (NMS)

These Regulations, Guidance and Standards have now been published (1 April 2011). The new Standards have changed some aspects of the fostering, which are contained in the following values;

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.

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- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account
- The significance of contact for looked after children, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster carer's role in this.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- Foster carers have a right to full information about the child.
- It is essential that foster carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.
- Genuine partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, fostering service providers and foster carers.

In many cases, Derbyshire County Council already has policies and procedures in place which comply with the new standards and will be familiar to you, through the foster carer handbook. The following section lists all the changes to the National Minimum Standards, which are especially relevant to foster carers, cross referencing them against policies, procedures and guidance.

1. Regular Sampling of Written Records – NMS 25.2 and 26.2 – Staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering household understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed/The manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by monitoring. **(Part 3.10 Handbook)**

2. Feedback to Inform Service Development – NMS 1.7 – The wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them (including carers) are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the service. **(Review Process)**

3. Specific Training for Connected People Carers – NMS 30.11 – Connected People carers have access to training available to other foster carers, but Derbyshire County Council's fostering service also offers training that addresses the particular needs and

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circumstances of Connected People carers. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

4. Other Specified Training Needs for Foster Carers Identified through the Matching Process – NMS 15.1 – Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service must ensure that a potential match for a child can go ahead, only if the foster carer can reasonably meet the child’s assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work to ensure the placement plan sets out any training, resource or support required. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

5. Equalities and Education – Statutory Guidance 3.46 and 3.104 – Carers are expected to be trained on all aspects on equalities and anti-discriminatory practice (Diversity Training) and carers are to undertake the role of advocate/’good parent’ with regards LAC education **(Part 5 Handbook and the Statement of Purpose)**

6. Training for Foster Carers Caring for Children with Complex Needs – NMS 6.8 – Foster carers receive guidance and training to provide appropriate care, if looking after children with complex health needs. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

7. Preparation for Independence Training for Foster Carers – NMS 12.3 - Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service ensures there are comprehensive arrangements for preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence. This includes appropriate training and support to foster carers caring for young people who are approaching adulthood. Arrangements are consistent with the young person’s care plan, including their placement plan, pathway plan and transition plan for children with disabilities and special educational needs. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

9. Behaviour Management – NMS 3.8 – All foster carers receive training in positive care and control of children, including training in de-escalating problems and dispute. Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts and discipline. The fostering service’s policy is made clear to the child, parents and carers before placement begins or, in an emergency placement, at the time of placement. **(Part 4.1 Handbook alongside the Fostering Changes training course)**

10. Training Portfolio for Foster Carers – NMS 20 (Specifically 20.6) and Statutory Guidance 5.70 – All new foster carers receive an induction/ All foster carers, including all members of a household, who are approved carers, are supported to achieve the CWDC TSD Foster Care....within 12 months of approval/ The reviews of each carer approval include an appraisal of performance against clear and consistent standards set by the authority, and consideration of training and development needs, which are documented in the review report. The foster carer’s personal development plan is reviewed and the effectiveness of training and development received is evaluated.

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Reviews take into account the views of each child currently placed with the foster carer.
(Part 7.2 Fostering Procedures)

11. Training for Foster Carers Regarding Specific Safeguarding Vulnerabilities of Disabled Children – NMS 4.6 – Foster carers are trained in appropriate safer-care practice, including skills to care for children who have been abused. For foster carers who offer placements to disabled children, this includes training specifically on issues affected disabled children. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

12. Safer Carer Training for Foster Carers, which addresses Caring for Children who have been Abused – NMS 4.6 (See above) and NMS 20.9 – Appropriate training on safer caring is provided for all members of the foster household, including young people of sufficient age and understanding, and ensures that foster carers understand how safer caring principles should be applied in a way which meets the needs of the individual child. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

13. Safeguarding Training for all Foster Carers equivalent to the Basic Level provided by LSGB – Statutory Guidance 3.84. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

14. Health and Safety – NMS 10.3 and Statutory Guidance 3.82 – Foster carers are trained in health and safety responsibilities. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with their home. **(Refer to your Supervising Social Worker for additional or specific training needs)**

15. Risk Assessment for Foster Carers – Statutory Guidance 3.64 – In line with the new ethos of NMS, carers are expected to take on the role of the ‘good parent’ and, as such, should be expected to evaluate risk with regards the child in placement.

16. Health Issues and Medication – NMS 6.7 and 6.10 and Statutory Guidance 3.58 – Foster carers receive sufficient training on health and hygiene issues and first aid, with particular emphasis on health promotion and communicable disease/Foster carers are trained in the management and administration of medication. Prescribed medication is only given to the child for whom it was prescribed, and in accordance with the prescription. Children who wish to and who can safely keep and take their own medication, do so. (See also Administration of Medication, Treatment and First Aid – NMS 6.10 and Statutory Guidance 3.60 and 3.62) **(Part 4.8 and 4.9 Handbook, Carer Held File, First Aid training and specific training with Disability Team and Aiming High)**

17. Back Up Carers and Overnight Stays – NMS 7.3 and 7.7 and Statutory Guidance 3.17 – 24 – Foster carers understand what is in the child’s placement plan and have clarity about decisions they can make about the day to day arrangements for the child, including such matters as education, leisure activities, overnight stays, holidays and personal issues such as haircuts/Children can stay overnight, holiday with friends, or friends and relatives of their foster carer, or go on schools trips, subject to requirements of the care/placement plan, if foster carers consider it appropriate in individual

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circumstances. CRB checks are not normally sought as a precondition. **(Part 4.4 and 4.5 Handbook)**

18. Bedroom Sharing for those over 3 years – NMS 10.6 – In the foster home, each child over the age of 3 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, Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service, takes into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the child concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed. **(Part 4.6 Handbook)**

19. Fostering Panel – Regulation 24 and 25 and NMS 14.1 – The fostering service implements clear, written policies and procedures on recruitment to, and maintenance of, the ‘Central List’ of persons considered by them to be suitable members of a fostering panel and on the constitution of fostering panels. **(Part 5.3 Procedures)**

20. Introducing Children to Placements – NMS 11.1 and Statutory Guidance 3.5 - Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service has and implements clear procedures for introducing the foster care placement to the foster carer and to others living in the household, which cover planned and, where permitted, emergency/immediate foster care placements. They help children understand what to expect from living in the foster home. **(Young Persons and Childs Fostering Booklets and carer’s foster home profiles)**

21. Whistle Blowing – Standard 19. 6 – ‘staff, volunteers, foster carers and panel members’ should be made aware of whistle blowing procedures. **(Part 8.6 Handbook and Statement of Purpose)**

22. Payment to Foster Carers – NMS 28.5 and Statutory Guidance 3.111 – There is a clear and transparent written policy on payments to foster carers that sets out the criteria for calculation payments and distinguishes between the allowance paid and any fee paid. The policy includes policies on payment of allowances and any fee during a break in placement or should the fostering household be subject to an allegation. **(Part 9 Handbook and annual Foster Carer Financial Handbook)**

23. Education Policies – NMS 8.5 and Statutory Guidance 3.103 - Derbyshire County Council’s fostering has, and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children’s education and is understood by foster carers. **(Part 5 Handbook)**

24. Staying Put Policy – NMS 12.4 and 28.4 and Statutory Guidance 3.125 - Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service has a policy and practical arrangements which enable children to remain with their foster carers into legal adulthood, for example, so that they may develop life skills before being required to move to more independent accommodation. Any such decisions are agreed with the foster carers at a placement meeting and are detailed in a child’s placement plan/Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service advises foster carers of financial and other support that is

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available to foster carers where a child remains with them after they reach the of 18 or where they care for/provide a home for a child and their parents. **(New policy and guidance to be available for March 2012)**

25. Acceptable Measures of Control, Restraint and Discipline – Regulation 13 and NMS 3.8 and Statutory Guidance 3.97 and 3.99 – All foster carers receive training in positive care and control of children, including training in de-escalating problems and disputes. Derbyshire County Council’s fostering service has a clear, written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts and discipline. The fostering service’s policy is made clear to the child, parents or carers before the placement begins or, in an emergency placement, at the time of the placement. **(Part 4.1 Handbook and the Fostering Changes course)**

26. Going Missing – NMS 5.2 and 5.4 and Statutory Guidance 3.88 to 3.94 – Foster carers know and implement what the fostering service’s policy is in relation to children going missing/Children who are absent from the foster home, without consent, but whose whereabouts are known or thought to be known by carers or staff, are protected in line with the fostering service’s written procedures. **(Part 4.3 Handbook)**

27. Health and Safety Policy – NMS 10.4 and Statutory Guidance 3.82 – Foster carers understand the authorities’ policy concerning safety for children in foster homes and in vehicles used to transport children. The service’s policy is regularly reviewed in line with most recent guidance from relevant bodies. **(Part 4.9 and 4.13 Handbook)**

28. Termination of Approval Policy – NMS 22.8 and Statutory Guidance 4.74 – As soon as possible after an investigation into a foster carer is concluded, their approval as suitable to foster is reviewed. There is a clear policy framework which outlines the circumstances in which a carer should be removed as one of Derbyshire County Council’s fostering services’ approved foster carers, in the interests of the safety or welfare of children. This is made available to carers. **(Part 7.5 Procedures)**

29. Complaints and Representations Policy – Regulation 18, Schedule 5 and 6, NMS 25.11 and Statutory Guidance 3.42 and 5.50 – The registered person has provided the service with a written policy and procedural guidelines on considering and responding to representations and complaints in accordance with the legal requirements and relevant statutory guidance. **(Part 8.4 Handbook and the Statement of Purpose)**

30. Safeguarding Policy to address the following; a) parent and child placements, b) allegations, c) clarification about the fees and allowances to be paid during the investigation and d) how to access LSCB procedures and e-safety advice – Regulation 12; a) Regulation 12(2) Annex B paragraph 12 b) Statutory Guidance 3.67 c) NMS 22.11 and 28.5 and Statutory Guidance 3.74 and d) Statutory Guidance 3.75 – There is written guidance for foster carers and staff, which makes clear how they will be supported during an investigation into an allegation including payment of allowance and any fee to foster carers while investigations are ongoing (See also NMS 28.5 and NMS 22.2 – The fostering service’s procedure is in line with Government guidance and requirements, including the duty to refer information to statutory bodies. It is known to foster carers, fostering service staff, volunteers and children). **(Financial Handbook and Part 8 Procedures)**

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Panel and Decision Making

For changes to the recruitment, training, structure and convening of the Fostering Panel, and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer and Agency Decision Maker, please refer to Part 5 of the Fostering Procedures.