

**SERIOUS
ABOUT
SOCIAL WORK**

Respite Foster Care Guidance and Procedures

Document last updated: July 2018
Document review due: July 2021

Respite Foster Care Guidance and Procedures

About this document

Title	Respite Foster Care Guidance and Procedures
Purpose	To provide guidance and procedures for social workers, supervising social workers and foster carers for the arrangements of respite care
Updated by	Rosemarie Cronin (TSD Co-ordinator)
Approved by	Children in Care Workstream
Date	July 2018
Version number	2
Status	
Review frequency	Three yearly
Next review date	July 2021

Version Control

Date Issued:	Version	Summary of Changes	Created by
July 18	2	Added information in regarding exemptions and change of approval if required	Rosemarie Cronin
July 18	2	Update of language	Rosemarie Cronin
July 18	2	Update to say that SSW are now responsible for arranging respite payments	Rosemarie Cronin

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Introduction and Legal Framework

Standard 21.5 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) states that “Foster carers are provided with breaks from caring as appropriate. These are planned to take into account the needs of any children placed”.

In Essex, foster carers are entitled to up to 28 days break entitlement a year. This provision is given to allow carers to have a break and can be particularly important when looking after children and young people with very complex behaviours. It may also provide an opportunity for foster carers to have time with their own family, especially if they have their own children still living in the household. Although this provision is available to foster carers and can be an important support tool, it is recognised that moving placements for children and young people can be disruptive and may leave them with a feeling of being left out of the family and many foster carers choose not to take their break entitlement for this reason. The aim of this document is to provide guidance and procedures to ensure that carers do feel able to have a break, should they wish to, but also ensuring that this is arranged in a way that is child focussed.

Some children and young people from Essex are placed in Independent Fostering Agencies. It is our expectations that the philosophy of this document will also be used in these situations. SSW’s from the IFA will need to plan and liaise with the child or young person’s social worker and IRO in the same way and any decisions regarding respite should be child centred.

Definitions

Respite Care

Carer to carer respite fostering is when children and young people who are looked after by foster carers, have a temporary stay with other foster carers.

Carer to carer respite fostering will sometimes be planned respite that is in response to the high care needs of the child or young person. This may include disabled children and young people or children and young people with very challenging behaviour. In these circumstances the respite is put in place to sustain the foster placement and prevent the child or young person experiencing the trauma of a placement breakdown.

Carer to carer respite will sometimes be provided in an emergency. Emergencies may include the foster carer temporarily being unable to look after the children or young people in their care due to their own poor health or other family emergencies. It may also be provided if the foster placement is at risk of breakdown due to complex needs of the child or young person.

As already stated, Essex foster carers are entitled to up to 28 days break entitlement a year; this means foster carers can receive foster care payments whilst not caring for children or young people. There may be some circumstances when a child or young person in placement may choose not to go on holiday with their foster carer. In these circumstances it is important to be clear about whether this is respite care or part of the carer's break entitlement. If the foster carer is **not** taking any other looked after children on holiday this should be taken as part of their twenty-eight days break entitlement. It will not be counted as break entitlement if the foster carer is taking other looked after children with them on holiday (or still have other children in placement).

Back-up carers

Foster carers are encouraged to consider their own network of family and friends who may be able to support them in their role of fostering and be able to look after children in foster care to enable the foster carer to have a break. The use of a back-up carer enables the foster child to stay within the foster carer's own network, akin to an arrangement a 'good parent' might make for a birth child. In such circumstances the substantive approved foster carer(s) retains responsibility for the child(ren) during the period of care when they are being looked after by the back-up carers. The substantive foster carer(s) must be available in an emergency and be contactable on the telephone, in line with the expectations made of good parents. The back-up carer does not need to be approved as a foster carer to provide this. Paragraph 3.23 of the Fostering Statutory Guidance 2011 states "There is no requirement that where a looked after child visits or spends a holiday with their foster carer's friends or relative that the individual must be approved as a local authority foster carer, as the child will remain formally placed with their usual foster carers".

If foster carers are arranging for a child or young person to stay with their back up carers overnight they should still inform the SSW and social worker of the child so they are aware that they are aware that the child is away from placement overnight. If this is arranged in an emergency then the social worker and SSW should be informed as soon as possible.

If foster carers are looking after children who have complex health needs that require specialist health care training, the back-up carer should also have this training before the child or young person is placed.

Other alternatives to respite care

Foster carers should also be encouraged to consider other options which may allow for them to have a break without the child or young person feeling like they are being 'sent' to an alternative placement. There may be options of residential holidays – which may be following an interest the child or young person already has e.g. activity holidays or holidays through organisations that they are already involved in e.g. cadets.

Pre-planning for respite

Assessment process

Respite care should be discussed during the assessment and approval process as a foster carer. This should include the use of back-up carers and whether there are people who could care for the child if there was an emergency in the fostering household. The discussion should also include whether there are potential back-up carers who would be prepared to have children and young people go and stay with them if, for example, the carers go on holiday.

This information would be included in the fostering assessment but should also be included in the summary section of the case history on the carer's file so if there was an emergency and the Emergency Duty Service became involved and needed to access the information quickly.

Placement Making

Placement officers or ART should ensure that placements are not made when a carer has an imminent holiday planned which the child would not be able to participate in. If the foster carer is going on holiday and is prepared to take the child/young person with them then there needs to be discussion as to whether it is appropriate for the child. If it is appropriate then the child or young person's views should be sought and also that of the parent or anyone else with parental responsibility. This should be discussed fully and confirmed **before** agreement to the placement to prevent a placement being made and then a further change of placement required due to arrangements for holiday not working out.

When regular respite is identified and agreed at the point of placement this should be recorded on the carers electronic record and also in the Placement Plan which becomes

part of the care plan for the child. This should not be changed due to any changes in social worker or teams. Any changes that are made to this arrangement should be agreed with the IRO and consideration should be giving to supporting the placement and not putting the placement at risk. The foster carers should be consulted and must be told of any changes and the reasons for the change.

The use of respite care should be child focused and there are some situations when respite may not be appropriate. This includes the following:

- Any children placed who are under 5 years old
- Children and young people where there are particular attachment difficulties
- Bridging to adoption placements

When making such placements the placement officer/ART must be clear with the carer that this is the expectation unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There may also be situations where a child or young person may request respite away from their carer and this should be carefully considered alongside the reasons for the request.

Delegated Authority

Delegated Authority should be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting for the child or young person's permanent placement. It is recommend that at this meeting respite care is discussed and agreement is sought from all relevant parties for when/if the child or young person goes to stay with another carer. This should then be recorded on the delegated authority document

Process for arranging respite care

The request for respite may come from different forums. It may be agreed as part of an initial agreement for the placement; it may be agreed as part of a support plan from a Placement Stability Meeting, it may be planned break for the foster carer or it could be an emergency situation. The basic principle is the sooner the request is made the better it will be for all concerned.

Some foster carers when planning for their break may consult with another foster carer whom they use for respite and is known to the children. We do not wish to stop this happening as it means that the foster carer is likely to be able to arrange their holiday at

a time when it fits in with the other carer this is likely to be in the best interests of the child or young person. However, although these preliminary discussions can be useful it is not a means for formally agreeing the respite and the following procedure should be followed:

1. The SSW needs to be aware of the request. In most circumstances the foster carer will be the person to inform the SSW when they are planning to use some of their break entitlement. If agreement for respite is agreed via another forum then it should be agreed at that meeting, if the SSW is not present, who is responsible for telling the SSW.
2. The SSW should then contact the social worker and the IRO for the child and seek out their agreement for the respite.
3. SSW to complete a respite care checklist (Appendix 1). This should then be uploaded onto the child's electronic record and the foster carer's electronic record. The Supervising Social Worker is responsible for finding the respite placement. They should also inform the Placement Officer in the team of the arrangements, so this is considered regarding any future planned placements.
4. The decision to agree the respite must be with the child's social worker/team manager or duty social worker. If the respite is planned it should be arranged taking into consideration of the situation for the particular child. However, it should be recognised that foster carers also have the right to their 28 days break entitlement.
5. Once the decision has been made the social worker should record this on the child's file and the SSW should record it on the foster carer file.
6. If the respite is planned a Placement Planning meeting should be arranged. If a child or young person is having regular respite with the same carer a Placement Planning Meeting can include a series of respites and any updates can be passed on at the time of placement.
7. In an emergency this should take place as soon as possible after the placement but within 5 working days. However, as much basic information must be passed onto

the respite foster carer at the point of placement, e.g. contact arrangements, medical information and routines for the child or young person, ideally the Placement Information Sheet (Appendix 2), should be completed and given to the respite/back up carer.

8. In both planned and emergency placements Delegated Authority should be agreed. This may be agreed when the child or young person is first placed with the main carer, and the parent agrees the same delegated authority is given to a respite/back up carer. If this has not been agreed previously a new agreement must be set up so the respite carer knows what authority they have to make any decisions that are required.
9. If a placement is made in an emergency by the Emergency Duty Service, attempts should be made to place the child with someone that the child or young person already knows. It is therefore important to be clear on the file if a child has been with other carers and how the arrangement worked for the child. This information should be included in the case summary of the child's file. This information can then be used by EDS when considering alternative placements.
10. If a placement is made in an emergency the child or young people should, as a minimum, have been shown a copy of the carers profile card which provides some photos and information about where they are being moved to.
11. If the placement is planned arrangements should be made for the child/young person to visit the respite carer's home and be able to meet them and see the bedroom where they will be using.
12. The Supervising Social Worker to ensure that the Placement Information Sheet (Appendix 2) has been completed by carers and given to the respite carer.
13. If the child has any specialist health care needs the carers should be trained and signed off on this before the respite takes place. In an emergency, the social worker/SSW must refer carer for emergency specialist health care training from the Specialist Health Care Tasks Service as a matter of urgency so that they can arrange to visit the carer and give them the training/instruction that they need.

14. If it is expected that the child or young person will be sharing a bedroom when in the respite placement the SSW should complete a Bedroom Sharing Risk Assessment, this is completed in conjunction with the social workers of any children who are involved. If the bedroom assessment has already been completed for the current placement and does not involve any additional children then it does not need to be completed again for the respite arrangement.

15. If by placing a child or young person with a carer for respite means that the carer has more than 3 children in placement than an exemption to foster beyond the fostering limit is required (see exemption process). In addition to this if the placement is for more than 6 days and is outside of the carers approval, this should also be changed.

16. The supervising social worker of the foster carer is responsible for arranging payments for respite. These are normally arranged at the end of the placement to ensure that the correct payment is made for the length of time the child is in placement and over payments are not made. Foster carers should follow this up if they have not received their payment within 3 weeks of the placement.

Post Placement

When the placement has ended and the child/young person has returned to their main carer it is important that information is recorded about how the placement went from all perspectives. It is recognised that this information is likely to be in different places e.g. child's file, main foster carers file and on the respite foster carers file and several people are likely to have contributed to the overall picture.

The fostering team should also send out an end of placement form to the social worker and the respite carer to request feedback. This information will also be included in the foster carer's annual household review.

Social Worker and Supervising Social Workers should discuss placements with child and carers respectively. (See Record Keeping below)

If any particular issues come up from discussions with either the main foster carer, the respite foster carer or the child or young person, then the relevant SSW and SW should discuss as soon as it is known so any follow up can be completed in a timely way.

The IRO should discuss any respite arrangements in the next review and when they next see the child or young person on their own.

Record Keeping

The SSW of both the main carer and the respite carer should discuss the respite arrangement in the next supervision session. It is suggested that as well as recording it in the supervision discussion it is also recorded as a 'case note' so it can be highlighted easily if the information was required.

The social worker of the child or young person should talk to them about how the respite went and record this on their record. They should also complete the End of Placement form to provide feedback on the respite carer.

The respite foster carer should also complete foster carers logs for the duration of the placement with them. **The main foster carer** should also record in their logs if the child or young person has given any feedback regarding the respite placement.

Appendix 1

RESPITE REQUEST INFORMATION CHECK LIST

Fostering Team:

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Name of Child/Young Person requiring respite:

.....

Date of Birth of Child/Young Person:

.....

Social Worker and Team of Child/Young Person:

.....

Independent Reviewing Officer:

.....

Name and Address of Foster requesting respite:

.....

.....

Date respite required:

From:

To:

Reason respite is requested:

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.....

Is the respite part of the foster carers 28 days break entitlement?

.....

Was respite discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting and Delegated Authority granted?

.....

Section of Children Act 1989 the child/young person is placed under?

.....

Date requested from social worker:

.....

Date request agreed by SW:

.....

Date requested from IRO:

.....

Date request agreed by IRO:

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**Name and address of foster carer providing respite:
(If already arranged)**

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**Are any children sharing a bedroom which has not already been assessed?
If so has the risk assessment been completed?**

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Information about Child/Young person requiring respite: (please include all relevant information including health and means of communication)

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Appendix 2

Respite/Back-up Carer to Carer Information Sheet

This information is in addition to the respite placement planning details which should be shared with both main carer and respite/back up carer

Full Name of Child/YP	
Known by any other name?	
Date of Birth	
Brief physical description	
Reasons for the respite	
Are there any specific requirements relating to religion, culture, diet?	
Does the child/YP have any special needs i.e. educational, learning, physical, health, allergies, methods of communication? Are there any specialist health tasks/needs? If so have these been discussed and any training needs accessed.	
Are there any risks, including risk of absconding? If yes has a risk assessment been completed and shared with respite carer?	
Any matching considerations or implications?	
NHS number	
Are there any regular medications at this time? (MAR chart should be used to record administration of all medication)	
Food likes & dislikes	
YP / Child's IRO name and details. Has IRO consent been given for respite?	
YP/ Child's Social worker, team & quadrant & contact details.	
Who to contact in emergency?	
GP/Consultant details	

Does the child have an 'Open Access Card' to the Ward.	
Dentist details	
Parent(s) contact details. Or other significant family members	
Legal status / section of Children Act 1989 the child/YP is placed under?	

School

School address / year/class /contact details / named tutor	
How does the child normally get to school? How will they get to school whilst on respite? Transport/Taxi details	
After school or extra-curricular activities. Will these continue whilst on respite?	
School dinner arrangements.	
Is there a risk of truanting? If so what are the agreed procedures?	

Respite Placement

Period of Respite (To-From)	
Transport arrangements to and from the placement.	
Will the child have their own bedroom? If not has a bedroom risk assessment been completed?	
Will child attend contact during respite? What are the arrangements?	
Are there any persons the child cannot see? Reasons.	
Are there any special friends the child has and can have contact with? Telephone; play dates; overnight. Specify friends' details	
Are there any particular concerns regarding the child/young person	

going missing. If so note any key information e.g. is there somewhere the child/young person regularly runs too, useful addresses/phone numbers	
Does the child / Young person have a mobile phone? Are there any issues or restrictions on use? Any details regarding social media/apps etc.	
Details of child's hobbies / clubs. Can these be continued during respite?	
Pocket Money arrangements. (how much and when) Including mobile phone top ups.	
Childs current routines, including self-care and hygiene, bedtimes and getting up times (weekend and weekdays), meal times. Can these continue in the respite placement?	
Any appointments that occur during the respite period.	
Has the delegated authority form been agreed for the respite/back up carer? If so, do they have a copy?	

Main Carer(s)

<i>Carer's Name (s)</i>	
<i>Carer's Address & telephone numbers</i>	
Supervising social worker & quadrant	
SSW Contact details.	
Who to contact in emergency?	

Respite Carer(s)

Carer's Name (s)	
Carer's Address & telephone numbers	
Driver/Non-driver?	

Supervising social worker & quadrant	
SSW contact details.	
Who to contact in emergency?	
Other children in the household / ages	
Pets in the household	
Smoker/ Non-smoker	

Please add any other information you think might be useful to know

Attach a recent photograph

