

Kent Fostering Emergency Bed Scheme Policy for Children and Young People in Care

Integrated Children's Services

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Fostering Emergency Bed Scheme

1. Aim

The remit for the Emergency Foster Bed scheme is to provide a safe home for children and young people, 0-17 years old, who need an immediate place of safety and for when an appropriately matched placement cannot be identified. The foster home will enable a young person to be cared for by a skilled foster carer who can support them at a time of crisis. The carer will provide the emotional, physical and material needs for the child or young person whilst they are in their care.

2. Operation of the Scheme

The scheme is one that provides a short-term solution for a child or young person who requires a home due to a range of circumstances that may include:

- being made subject to Police Protection.
- a family breakdown and no appropriate matched placement can be identified.
- a foster care or residential home breakdown where they cannot return to or remain in, due to the level of risk.
- A newly arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person aged under 16 years old who is subject to social service intervention
- A young person has been arrested or has bail conditions which prevent a return to their current home.

In such circumstances the Emergency Bed is an interim provision to enable and develop care planning and for further searches for a permanent home to be undertaken which may include support to return to family.

The Emergency Bed provides a short-term home for 10 working days. This can be extended for a period of an additional 5 working days in exceptional circumstances which might include: the child's matched identified placement not being immediately available; to support continued searches for a home, and/or additional work to be completed with families before a rehabilitation home. The 5 days additional period should be authorised by the Service Manager for the Total Placement Service (TPS) after consultation with the respective Fostering Support Team Manager who is responsible for the carer. The identified timeframes provide the children's social work teams time to develop planning, risk assessments and a placement plan referral that captures the child, their needs and how these will be met to support finding a home.

The scheme operates on a rota basis of carers that provide this placement provision. Each carer that provides this resource is on rota for a period of 6 weeks followed by two weeks off rota.

3. Emergency Bed Carer Placement Capacity:

The Emergency Bed is a specialist placement that provides placements for children and young people in times of crisis, which often requires that the carer manage a significant level of risk. Therefore, considering this it is advised that a foster carer provide a maximum of two emergency beds. Ideally, to ensure that all needs can be met, and requirements are achieved a single placement would be preferred. However, it is recognised that a foster carer could achieve working with and managing the risks of two placements if these are appropriately matched. In such circumstances it is important that in the referral process the foster carer and the allocated Fostering Social Worker (FSW) continually review and assess whether the fostering household can meet the needs of two children or young people. It is important that within the foster carers Annual Review the capacity to provide more than one placement is explored, evidenced and confirmed that this can be safely achieved in the forthcoming year.

When matching children and young people to access the Emergency Bed there will be consideration regarding the complexity of emotional and behavioural management of the other child in the foster home. All placement considerations will be linked to risk assessments and the capacity of the foster carer to manage the complex needs of two potentially significant high-risk young people. There may be circumstances where the carer would not be expected to provide a placement for two highly complex children at the same time. e.g. two children who were in residential placement and required at least 1:1 support. Where it is considered appropriate to the level of risk being presented and managed by a foster carer, there is exceptional recourse for a second Emergency Bed to be closed with the foster carer continuing to be paid the agreed rate for the closed placement; in effect a solo placement. The decision making for the second bed being closed in such circumstances will be made by the Service Manager for TPS considering the risk factors and the view of the foster carer and Fostering Team Manager.

4. Accessing the Emergency Bed Scheme:

The remit for accessing the scheme are detailed above in section 2 of the policy. To access the Emergency Bed the allocated social worker (or duty social worker) will complete a placement plan referral and submit to TPS. TPS will explore available placements internally and externally. In circumstances where a placement is required as a matter of urgency and a placement is not able to be identified by 16:00pm on the search day, a decision will be made by the Service Manager of TPS regarding accessing the Emergency Bed provision. Once this decision is made the identified placement officer, foster carer, and child's social worker will be informed so that all necessary processes can be implemented for the foster home to be accessed and payments initiated.

Once a child has been linked to the foster carer on the Liberi system, the allocated children's social worker (or duty worker) will complete an additional placement referral to ensure that new searches can commence for a placement. This must be completed within 48 hours of the placement commencing to avoid delays in further placement searches and effective use of the Emergency Bed.

During Out of Hours, between 17:00pm and 08:30am, Monday – Friday, or weekends and bank holiday's, the decision to access the Emergency Bed provision will fall to the relevant Manager for Kent and Medway's Out of Hours Service.

It is recognised at times that placements are required Out of Hours, or late in a working day and therefore the opportunity to provide the referral is limited. If an Emergency Bed placement is made by County Out of Hours Service, it is expected that they provide the foster carer with the most recent assessment of need and any risks to ensure the foster carer has a level of information to adequately meet the need of the child or young person; and develop an appropriate safe care plan specific to that child or young person's needs.

If the placement is made by TPS late in a business day and there is no capacity for a referral to be completed on the day of placement; a brief overview as to why the placement is required, what is going well, what we are worried about and complicating factors and risks will be submitted by the children's social work team to be shared with the carer prior to agreeing the placement. In addition the children's social work team will provide any relevant information, i.e. latest child in care review, child and family assessment, risk assessment, health medical etc. that would support the emergency bed foster carer to have a level of information to adequately meet the need of the child or young person; and develop an appropriate safe care plan specific to that child or young person's needs.

It is required that the child/young person's social worker will complete and submit a placement plan on the first working day after the placement is made, if as detailed in the above paragraph, so the child can be linked to the foster carer, and processes completed. The social worker is to ensure that the second placement plan is also completed to enable searches for a new placement to commence as a matter of urgency as detailed above.

5. Payments and additional support

It is recognised that the Emergency Bed provision is one that requires the foster carers to work with children who present with significant complex emotional and behavioural needs. It is also recognised that foster carers are required to be available for a placement all hours of a working day. This is therefore recognised in the level of payments offered in the scheme to foster carers.

a. Retainer payments

This is paid to the foster carer regardless of having children in placement.

- i) £250 per week
- ii) £35.72 per night.

b. Payments when a child/young person is placed:

Additional Payments, Reward and Maintenance, when a child is placed should be paid at the higher rate regardless of the age of the child. This will be paid as a daily rate and according to the period that the child or young person is in placement. As soon as the child leaves placement the daily payments cease.

Reward:

- i) £221.82 per week
- ii) £31.68 per night

Maintenance:

- i) £234.77 per week
- ii) £33.54 per night

c. Complex needs enhanced payment:

Emergency Bed foster carers are requested at times to provide a placement for children or young people whose care plan requires a more specialised environment to meet their holistic needs (i.e. residential care). When such placements are required it is recognised that foster carers are managing a significantly higher level of risk and this will be rewarded with a complex need enhanced payment. This payment would be equal to that received by carers of severely disabled children and is based on the higher rate of the Disability Living Allowance payments. The assessment of the complexity of need and authorisation of this payment will be agreed by the Service Manager (or delegated person) in TPS.

- i) £87.65 per week
- ii) £12.52 per night

Foster carers who provide an Emergency Bed provision will also receive their Skill Level payment as additional to the identified payments listed.

All Emergency Bed payments are subject to review on an annual basis regarding increases or decreases, if applicable. Foster carers will be updated the first week in March, of each year, if payments are proposed to change.

d. Additional support available to foster carers to support with attending Support Groups and Training.

Foster Carers, as part of their annual review and requirements to maintain their fostering registration, are required to attend a certain level of training and attendance at Support Groups. In recognition of the crisis nature of Emergency Bed placements

and a high percentage of young people not in education, it can be difficult for the carer to attend the required level of Support Groups. Therefore, to support foster carers to attend Support Groups an additional package of Day Care support of 6 hours per month will also be factored into the scheme. Day Care support for foster carers can be:

- i) An identified foster carer providing Day Care or sessional work in the Emergency Bed Carer's home.
- ii) The child or young person in placement being transported by the Emergency Bed foster carer to an identified Foster Carers home.

On each of the above the Emergency Bed foster carer must provide their Fostering Team with the name of the identified Foster Carer to ensure this is considered an appropriate match. If it is considered not a match due to the risks presented by the young person an additional carer will need to be identified or a decision that the training or Support Group is missed that day. This will also provide the Fostering Team with information that can be uploaded to the child/young person's file to ensure that professionals are aware of the location of the child/young person (s).

Regarding training attendance, it is expected that foster carers will attend training during the two weeks that they are not on rota for placements. There is also a recognition that at times that one-off training is sourced by the Fostering Service. In such circumstances, if relevant to the carers training and development requirements, the Fostering Service will support with providing day care support to enable the carer to attend.

6. Expectation of Emergency Bed Foster Carer

The scheme provides foster carers who provide a safe home specially for short term and crisis work. The foster carer receives, a retainer payment whilst on rota; and once a child is placed the carer will also receive, on top of the retainer payment, the full Reward Element and Maintenance payment for the child as detailed in section 5 of the policy. Therefore, all expectations required of mainstream foster carers are also expected for Emergency Bed foster carers as outlined within Kent County Council's Policy and Guidance for fostering.

The roles and expectations of Emergency Bed foster carers will include:

- Accepting all placement referrals based on a risk assessment completed by the children's social worker. It is expected that all referrals for children will be accepted unless: there is factual and current risk around fire setting. This includes previous episodes of starting fires and/or that the behaviour of the child/young person's is known to include carrying matches and lighters or where they have made threats that detail the use of fire.
- The other risk in where carers could decline to offer a placement for a child, is where the child or young person has a lengthy and recent history of violence to

adults or carers and this risk is deemed medium or high, then careful consideration to accepting the placement is expected. It is recommended that there is discussion with the foster carer, FSW and the Children's Social Worker as to how this risk may be mitigated and whether the placement should proceed. The same criteria apply where children are currently subject to high levels of staffing supervision and whether a child or young person's behavioural and supervision needs can be met in a foster home. It must be taken into account that foster carers provide care within a family home and should not be expected to provide waking nights or 24-hour supervision of a child, that would usually be provided by a team of residential staff. All other referrals are to be accepted.

- If the child is accessing the Emergency Bed after a foster placement breakdown and they have been in care for more than 13 weeks, the emergency bed carer will be responsible for paying the savings amount applicable to the age of the child as set out in KCC's Pocket Money and Savings Policy.
- The foster carer will ensure that the child is provided with the agreed amount of pocket money related to the child's age as set out in KCC's Pocket Money and Savings Policy.
- If the child or young person does not have access to appropriate clothing and toiletries to meet their self-care needs, the foster carer will provide/or buy these items to ensure the child or young person's immediate physical needs are met.
- Foster carers will provide all reasonable transport needs for the child or young person. This will include attending school, within a 20-mile radius; attending any appointments associated with health needs, attending contact with parents, attending appointments with Youth Justice or police and attending appointments regarding status etc.
- The foster carer is available to be contacted 24 hours a day in relation to the child. However, it is understood that carers have appointments and other commitments. Therefore, carers should respond to communication with 1 hour during the daytime hours, and 30 mins from 17:00pm.
- Foster carers will keep daily records and provide a report (template provided) at the end of the child or young person's time with them. This should include areas such as: How the child or young person presented (physically and emotionally) when entering placement. How the child related to people in placement? What food the child liked? Any hobbies etc the child shared that they liked? Any triggers for behaviours? What strategies worked to support the young person if they felt worried? It will be important to capture the positive elements of the child's stay.
- The foster carer will assist in supporting the transition of the young person from the Emergency Bed to their next identified placement, or a return home. This will include supporting the child's social worker to explain plans and support with gathering the child's belongings for the placement move. Where appropriate the emergency bed foster carer will be involved with the child's next placement plan meeting to provide insight and support for the next foster carer.

- The foster carer will ensure that they inform their allocated FSW or the Duty FSW, immediately, of any changes that may impact their capacity to provide an emergency bed provision.
- The foster carer will inform their allocated social worker and TPS of when the child has moved placement so to ensure that availability is updated regarding the Emergency Bed.
- If the foster carer wishes to end or change their emergency bed capacity, then it is required that they give a 28-day notice of intent to the ending of this provision within their household to their fostering social worker and TPS.

7. What is not the foster carer's role

- The foster carer is not expected to collect a child starting the placement and transport them into placement. All children and young people should be supported and settled into the foster carers home, at the start of their emergency bed placement by a social worker.
- It is not expected that a foster carer will transport a child/young person to their next identified placement or return to their family. This is the role of the child's social worker.

8. Training and support group expectations

- It is expected that foster carers will ensure that they develop their skills and knowledge in working with children in care that are experiencing crisis, potential links to gangs, CSE or criminal exploitation. This should be at least 2 face to face trainings and 4 e-learning trainings a year (the 4 e-learning training are to compensate the reduced support group attendance).
- It is acknowledged that due to the unknown nature of the needs of children/young people in placement that attending support group can present challenges on the day of attendance. However, in line with KCC policy it is expected the carers will attend at the minimum 5 support groups per year.

9. The role of the Total Placement Service (TPS)

Kent County Council have a centralised home finding team to co-ordinate the use of all types of homes for children and young people. As with all placement searches, TPS will receive a placement plan referral from the children's team regarding the care plan needs of the child/young person. When approaching the Emergency Bed foster carers, TPS will share all details contained within the referral to support the carers understanding the needs of the child accessing the placement.

- Once the placement is agreed TPS will send a copy of the referral which will provide the carer will all relevant information to familiarise themselves with the child

- TPS will ensure information regarding risk contained within the referral is highlighted to the carer.
- TPS, if requested by the allocated children's social worker, will also send the foster carer the delegated authority for the child, if a child is subject to a care order, to meet the child's needs.
- If the child is subject to s.20 accommodation, TPS will ensure that they inform the child's social worker to provide signed consent by the child's parents for the carer to meet the child's needs, including medical.
- If the child or young person is not newly received into care when accessing the Emergency Bed, TPS will, if provided by the allocated children's social worker, send the child's last child in care review minutes and the child's last CIC medical to support and inform care of the child or young person.
- If the child is accessing the placement direct from their birth family TPS will provide the Emergency Bed carer with information contained within KCC's Liberi system that has been sent to them by the child's social worker. This would include the most recent Child and Family Assessment or other relevant information to support the Carer to meet the needs of the child/young person.
- TPS will ensure that once a placement is made that the foster carers payments are promptly set up.
- TPS will ensure that they update the carer's fostering social worker to ensure that they receive the necessary support to meet the needs of the child.

10. The Role of the Fostering Support Team:

The support team Fostering Social Worker (FSW) is the allocated professional to provide the foster carer with supervision, support, guidance and information on service development. Due to the complex nature of being an emergency bed foster carer it is recognised that additional support is required, this will include:

- 4 weekly supervision.
- support by their allocated FSW to identify training that will be most beneficial in developing their skillsets.
- Support to complete the annual review process regarding review of the carer's approval status.
- receiving a phone call from the Fostering Duty Day team within 24 hours of a placement being made, or the next available working day (Fostering Duty Day team is not available at weekends or bank holidays.)
- at least 3 support calls per week from the fostering duty support.
- carers having their Safe Care plans reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that all safeguarding areas are considered in meeting the needs of children/young people.
- carers will have access to the relevant Fostering OOH's contact details when the day support duty end at 17:00pm. The Fostering OOH's support will be available between 17:00pm through to 23:00pm. At this point the Foster Carers will contact

County out of OOH's between 23:00pm through to 08:30am for support and guidance.

- On a weekend, carers will be able to utilise the fostering OOH's service which runs from 08:30am through to 23:00pm on weekends and Bank Holidays throughout the year. At 23:00pm the support available to foster carers will transfer to the County OOH's team
- FSW's will complete at least 2 unannounced visits within a 12 months period to the carer.
- carers will have a placement plan completed by the FSW within 5 days of commencement of a placement.

11. The Role of County Out of Hours:

Kent County Council's County Out of Hours Service is available from 17:00pm through to 08:30am, Monday – Friday. On weekends and Bank Holiday's the County Out of Hours service is available all day until the next working day at 08:30am.

Kent County Council's County Out of Hours Service is the social services main point of contact for Adult and Children's Services, which also includes Medway.

12. The County Out of Hours Service will:

- Provide full information that is available regarding a child being placed to support the foster carer develop safe care planning. This information will be shared via telephone conversation if Fostering Out of Hours support has ended. The information available will also be sent to the emergency bed foster carer via e mail.
- If a child or young person is placed out of Out of Hour's, then the on duty Social Worker will support with placing the child or young person.
- County Out of Hours will provide phone call support for the carer at least once per day over the weekend or bank holiday for any new child in placement.
- Foster carers will have access to the Kent's County Out of Hour's number to report a child or young person missing – providing full CAD reference number from the police; and any other known information about the child or young person.
- Foster carers will contact Kent's County Out of Hour's to inform the service if a child is missing or has returned to the foster home.
- When a placement is made by County Out of Hours a placement plan will be initiated and assigned to the TPS. An email will also be sent to the TPS referrals email to inform them that a placement has been made with an Emergency Bed Foster Carer. This will also include information regarding any agreed Out of Approvals or Exemptions.

13. Rota for Emergency Bed Carers

A rota will be developed for Emergency Bed carers regarding the 6 weeks on two weeks off process. The rota will be developed to ensure that there is always an Emergency Bed foster carer available to take placements. The Fostering Service recognise that there will be times when carers may experience unexpected circumstances, and this will have to be factored into the provision available. However, outside of this, any additional periods of time required to be off rota will require a request to do so to be submitted at least 3 weeks in advance. This provides the Fostering Service the opportunity to ensure that this period is covered with another Emergency Bed foster carer optimising available provision.

The Rota for the foster carers is compiled by a Senior practitioner in TPS. The Rota will be completed for a 12-month period in advance. Once completed the rota will be shared with the relevant Fostering Social Workers and the foster carers. A start time of 08:30am, on their first day, for Emergency Bed carers when they start their rota period. It is expected that the foster carer's rota period will end at 17:00pm on the last day of their availability.

Annual Leave for Emergency Bed Foster Carers:

All foster carers are entitled to two weeks paid annual leave. Foster carers are to request their annual leave through their allocated FSW at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested period off. Once the request is received the allocated FSW will liaise with TPS to confirm the request can be accommodated.