

Kent Foster Care Association



K.F.C.A

Preventing Placement Breakdown

Guidelines and Best Practice

Produced by KFCA December 2007

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Introduction

In 2007, the KFCA undertook the Preventing Placement Breakdown Project with the **objective** of reducing the number of placement breakdowns and empowering foster carers to manage challenging behaviour effectively while improving communication and support with and by social workers and schools.

We undertook discussion groups with foster carers and social worker to identify

- The causes of placement breakdown.
- What was needed to prevent placement breakdown.

The output from these discussions was collated into a document which was discussed at a multi agency workshop in November 2007.

The primary project deliverables were:

1. This document outlining Guidelines and Best Practice to prevent placement breakdown.
2. A further document entitled Behaviour Management Toolkit which identifies various techniques that can be used to manage challenging behaviour.
3. A series of workshops aimed at increasing foster carers' confidence in their professional role as carer. These include:
 - Effective Communication
 - Children Who Foster
 - The Psychology of Care
 - Assertiveness & Stress Management

It is reported that in the UK, 15% of LAC placements breakdown while in Kent this appears to be about 12%. Research also indicates that 50% of teenage placements breakdown.

A placement breakdown will impact on a LAC educationally and emotionally; it will undermine their well-being and feelings of self-worth. The foster carer who experiences placement breakdown can become disillusioned and suffer from confidence being undermined.

The local authority's (already overloaded) workload will incur further increases in cost and face difficulties in placing the child.

No-one benefits from placement breakdown.

The collective service would benefit from *preventing* placement breakdown.

As a direct result of the Preventing Placement Breakdown Workshop, we can already report several positive changes that have taken place:-

- 1) A procedure has been put in place to monitor late payments to foster carers.

2) We have agreed a KCC funded interagency conference to take place in March 2008 on developing effective working through a shared understanding of the needs of Foster Carers, Looked After Children and, in particular, behaviour issues.

3) A pilot of a new procedure which will alert the management team of placements that are at risk of disruption and provide feedback to carers.

4) The annual review form has been updated to include foster carer feedback on other agencies.

Causes of Placement Breakdown

Discussions with foster carers and social workers identify the main reasons for placement breakdown which can be summarised as:

1) Insufficient and poor quality information available before and after placement. This results in poor planning and poor matching of the child with the carer's experience. The need for close liaison between the services supporting the child is highlighted; communication between all parties is not always effective.

2) Lack of professional input/guidance to support placement. This includes support from social worker, provision and liaison from CAMHS, and co-operative working with schools to prevent exclusion.

3) The lack of respite or day care for challenging placements or school non-attenders.

4) Challenging behaviour particularly where there are extremes such as violence. This is made worse where the carer feels unsafe and/or does not feel supported by the child's network.

5) Allegations against a carer or a family member, or fear of an allegation where a child has a history of making allegations, will undermine the carer's confidence in maintaining the placement. Foster Carers consider themselves exposed to a biased system.

6) Family difficulties, including birth family contact, birth family undermining placement, and poor relationship between carer's family and the placement.

7) The overall service is limited by insufficient resources resulting in heavy case loads for social workers and insufficient foster carers.

Promoting Placement Stability

The [Social Care Institute for Excellence](#) (SCIE) indicates factors that promote stability These include:

- providing carers' respite and targeted support
- providing high quality assessment and planning

better retention of experienced carers
better liaison and more provision between education and child and adolescent mental health services.
having adequate information about the child's needs and long term plans

The research carried out by the KFCA indicates that we need to:

- Improve the quality of information available and the sharing of information. Placement matching would benefit from improved information to enable better choices and decisions. Communication between all parties is not always effective.
- We need to improve the support available when a placement is deemed at risk of disruption.
- We need to find practical solutions for providing child and carer with 'natural' respite.
- We need to improve foster carer confidence in dealing with challenging behaviour.
- We need to work co-operatively with schools to prevent exclusion and provide carers with support when children are out of school.
- Foster care has evolved to require professional foster carers; the foster carers and fostering service need to acknowledge carers as professionals. This requires carers to be appropriately trained and a shared sense of being members of a professional team.
- Disruption meetings should be convened when and/or soon after a placement breakdown occurs. Mediation looking at resolution positively and empathically might help prevent future unplanned endings and, in some cases, could even 'save' a placement.

It is within these areas that this document will attempt to identify Guidelines and Best Practice to Prevent Placement Breakdown.

The report is thus divided into the following sections

- Information Quality and Information Sharing
- Effective Communication
- Support for Placements at Risk
- Provision of Respite and Day Care
- Managing Challenging Behaviour
- Exclusion From School
- Professional Foster Carer

Much of the required Guidelines already exist in various policy statements and procedures. This document will bring these together, provide links for further information and identify roles and responsibilities where appropriate.

Information

Primary Information sources

There is a document on the KCC Cluster Web entitled [A Social Worker Guide to the Kent County Council Foster Care System](#) which outlines the documentation and procedures around placing a child. It presents 'who produces what' documents, summarised below.

Placement Referral Form: The child's social worker has the role of providing accurate and comprehensive information to the fostering team when making referrals for placement. The fostering social worker then prepares the standard referral form which is used as the basis for matching the child's needs and the foster carer.

Besides basic information about the child and their status, the form includes a risk assessment to identify potential challenges and other information aimed at enabling appropriate matching. Research indicates a clear link between good placement matching between the child's needs and the carer's resources and outcomes for the child.

Foster Carer Profile: The fostering social worker who will seek to match the child's needs to the carers with vacancies should also have on hand a copy of the Foster Carer Profile. This document is provided by the foster carer (and should be updated at least annually and following any significant change).

Essential Information record part 1: This document is completed by the C&F social worker and should always be completed and a copy given to the foster carers before any child is left with them. It contains basic information about the child, contact information and health. This document contains agreement and signature of foster carer to the placement. It will usually be finalised at a Placement Agreement Meeting prior to or at time of placement.

Essential Information Record Part 2: The Essential Information Record Part 2 should also be completed and copies given to the foster carer before a child is placed but in emergency placement circumstances these documents need to be completed as soon as possible. This document contains a more detailed medical record (including immunisation), education provision and record of schools attended, legal issues and offences, and a record of previous placements.

Care Plan: This document is a legal requirement for all LAC and carers should be given a copy. It details the current plans.

Placement Plan Part 1: This is the placement agreement which will be recorded by the child's social worker and should be copied to the carer prior to or at time of placement. It contains the carer's agreement to the placement and basic information about the child.

Placement Plan Part 2: This document is the day to day arrangements agreed for the placement. The meeting is chaired by the Fostering Social Worker who produced the report. The planning meeting must take place as soon after the placement as possible but

within 14 days. The document includes details of routines, health, education, emotional and behaviour development, contact arrangements and social/leisure activities.

Note: With the introduction of the new computer system (Integrated Children's System or CIS), the Placement Plan Part1 and Part2 will be replaced with a new document referred to as the Placement Information Record. This will necessitate a review of related procedures.

Personal Education Plan (PEP): The PEP is an education document. A carer should be given the latest copy of the PEP at the time of placement but a new PEP will be generated within 30 days of the new placement. The child's social worker arranges the meeting with the school, the foster carer and the fostering social worker. The report contains a record of educational achievements and targets and specifies any specific support requirements. It details **school contacts** and who can sign for permissions.

Carer's Reports: The BAAF have produced draft formats for a [Carer's Report](#) (one for children under 9 of age and one for children 9 years of age and over). It is recommended that these reports are produced by the foster carer every time a child or young person has a statutory health assessment, or when they change placement. They contain information about the emotional wellbeing of the child and are an opportunity to share the carer's knowledge of the child. They are not as yet KCC policy but we would like to see these used by carers as they would be invaluable when a child moves to a new placement to assist the new carer. The forms are reasonably easy to use with multiple choice options as well as explanations.

The KFCA would like to see the carer's report extended to include useful information about a child's routines, likes and dislikes and other information which would enable the new carer to help the child settle in their new placement.

Quality of Information

When you examine the reports listed above, they potentially hold all the information that would enable better planning and matching. However, there are many examples of these reports not being completed to an appropriate standard. Considering that there is a large amount of repetition within the reports and acknowledging that the paper work is a burden on an already stretched service, this is probably not surprising.

Information is only useful when it is recorded at the right level of detail, accurate and up to date. There is a massive amount of paper work which deals with services surrounding a looked after child, some of which are detailed above. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the information is fit for purpose and managed appropriately.

At the KFCA Preventing Placement Breakdown Workshop, it was suggested that automation of some of the information may become practical in the near future. There are changes taking place in 2008 with the introduction of a new computer system (Integrated Children's System or CIS) which has the potential to improve the flow of information. But we need to not lose sight of the fact that the system will only be as good as the

quality of the information entered. There will also be a massive task of entering paper based data into the system. However, it may well be possible to generate some of the paperwork from the system and reduce the amount of repetition that currently exists.

In the meantime, we all have a role to play in improving the quality of the information to enable:

- Improved matching of carer's experience and child's needs.
- To ensure the foster carer has access to appropriate and accurate information.
- To enable improved planning.
- To reduce placement disruptions.

Roles and Responsibilities

The C&F Social Worker has the ultimate responsibility for maintaining the LAC records.

The Fostering Social Worker has responsibility for producing the Placement Referral Form based on information provided by the C&F Social Worker. They are also the people who find the placement for the LAC.

The new Foster Carer Manual contains an Information Checklist (Section 3.2.3) which would be useful when approached by a fostering social worker about the placement of a child. The list of questions would be useful in establishing whether or not carers and their family can meet this child's needs, but also, if the child is placed with them, the information could be useful in welcoming the child into that carer's home.

The Foster Carer Manual also contains a list of information that might be relevant to give the fostering social worker prior to commitment (see section 3.2.4).

Foster carers have responsibility for maintaining daily records. Foster Carers must also produce a Foster Carer Profile which assists in the matching process. With the introduction of the Carer's Report, foster carers will be able to pass on their knowledge of the child when a child moves. Foster carers need to be assertive in ensuring they have the information required and, if necessary, seek the assistance of their Fostering Supervisor in updating the information.

The Placement Agreement Meeting is an opportune time for the foster carer to seek any further information that may be required. It is also an opportunity to negotiate specific roles and responsibilities with the child's social worker.

Information sharing

As equal partners in the foster care service, foster carers have a right to information which will enable them to decide if a placement is right for them and to help them decide how to integrate the placement into their family home. The [Social Worker Guide to the Kent County Council Foster Care System](#) states: *"To enable good matching to occur, no information relating to the child or family should be withheld from the fostering team or the foster carers. Where there are concerns about information sharing this needs to be*

reviewed with the fostering service in the context of a risk assessment in relation to the foster carer, their family and family networks. In the rare circumstances of withholding information the decision to do this must be endorsed by the team leader and recorded on the child's file."

Maintaining the Placement

Statutory Review: Once a placement has been made, a LAC Statutory Review should take place within 30 days. These meetings are an important part of the planning process for the child. Foster carers are essential members of these meetings and their input to the meeting is a vital part of this process. It is also an opportunity for the carer to ensure any support required is requested. The foster carer should produce a report as input to the meeting. This ensures that all issues are recorded and discussed and it also allows the carer time to collect thoughts, review daily reports and provide well thought out input to the meeting. A copy of suggested headings for a carer report is included in Appendix 3.

Supervision: The foster carer's fostering social worker will visit about once every 6 weeks. Again, this is an opportunity for carers to reflect on how the placement is progressing and to note any issues. Feedback from carers indicates that most carers find these supervision meetings of great benefit and that building a good working relationship between carer and fostering officer is important. KCC provides a training session about getting the most from supervision which should be attended by all carers.

C & F Social Worker: The child's social worker will visit the child and the carer on a regular basis. The [Social Worker Guide to the Kent County Council Foster Care System](#) states a visit "should take place as often as the circumstances of the child and placements require but at least within 1 week of placement, then at intervals of not more than 6 weeks during the first year of placement and at intervals of 3 months thereafter or when requested.

Foster carers too place great value on the quality of their working relationship with the child's social worker. A good supportive professional relationship is often cited by carers as the deciding factor in being able to cope with a particularly demanding child."

A foster carer should ensure the child's social worker is kept informed of the placement progress and any problems. This can be done by 'phone, email or letter. When a placement is in difficulties, a carer should ask to discuss with the social worker. Support from the social worker is valued by all carers.

School: All foster carers need to be aware of their responsibility in promoting the education of children in their care. KCC provide mandatory training.

We are aware that many placements fail when children are out of school. The KFCA undertook a project in 2006 to provide carers with guidelines on preventing exclusion from school. It details the processes and responsibilities and highlights the requirement

to work closely with the schools. Please read [Education of Looked After Children in Kent Foster Carers Guidelines and Best Practice](#).

Daily Report: Foster-carers are required to maintain an on-going diary of day-to-day and significant events affecting children in their care. The online Foster Carer Manual details what information should be recorded and why in section 1.10. In addition to the legal requirement to maintain these records, they can be invaluable to carers. Carers should review these notes when preparing for meetings.

Managing behaviour: behaviour problems are one of the key reasons placements fail. However, when there are behaviour issues, a carer is more likely to deal with these constructively if they feel they are supported by their fostering supervisor and the child's social worker. When there are difficulties in a placement, carers report that **Professional (or Network) Meetings** are invaluable in providing the support the carer needs to maintain the placement

The provision of good quality and up to date information prior to a placement enables the fostering team to match carers experience with the child's needs and allows the carer to decide if they can cope with the expected issues and if they can integrate the child within their own family or with other placements. Time spent in preparing this information by the C&F Social Worker, will reduce the likelihood of placement breakdown.

KCC provide training on behaviour management issues and have produced an updated document entitled [Managing Conflict & Encouraging Positive Behaviour](#) which is excellent. KFCA have produced a document entitled [Behaviour Management Toolkit](#) which identifies various techniques used by carers to manage behaviour. Also to be noted is the role of the Support Group. It should be noted that being able to share problems with other carers and to utilise their experience can be invaluable to new and experienced carers.

Many of the children in care experience problems before placement which have a direct link to their behaviour issues. Carers should discuss with their Fostering Supervisor appropriate training on issues such as attachment and trauma; understanding the behaviour is the first step in managing it, and can help prevent placement breakdown.

Ending the Placement

The majority of placements end in a planned way. About 12% of placements are disrupted and end with the carer requesting the child be removed. Our aim is to reduce such unplanned moves.

Not all placements can be or should be saved; there are times when it is in the child's best interest for them to move. Wherever possible, it should be done in a controlled and planned way to prevent feelings of failure by the child and the carer.

In our research we found that most placement disruptions were not due to a single major incident but by a series of smaller incidents where the carer was worn down by the continual difficulties. In these circumstances, the placement is known to be at risk of

disruption. The potential to save a placement at risk is great if positive, empathic and constructive support is put in place.

The Fostering service has agreed to pilot for 3 months from April an alert system which will highlight placements at risk.

This **Alert System** will put in place a process that will feed back to the carer what the worker is doing/has done to address any potential difficulties raised by the carers. It is recognised that carers need to feel heard and know that their problems are understood, taken seriously and being addressed.

This alert should be recorded on the carers s/v (supervision) sheet with what action has been agreed and feedback on the outcome of any action agreed should occur within a week by email or telephone to the carer. The supervising social worker will also share this with their manager/supervisor.

A carer has the right to request a review meeting be called earlier than planned when a situation is causing concern or the placement is at risk. It would be appropriate to discuss with the Fostering Supervisor and/or C&F Social Worker.

Planning: The C&F Social Worker is responsible for producing the plans for a LAC. The foster carer will have input to this process as will the child. The primary planning meeting is the LAC Review but the Network or Professional meetings also have a role to play. In all instances it will pay dividends to prepare well for such meetings. Carers are advised to review notes and be prepared to state their thoughts and ideas. Adequate warning of significant changes needs to be given (such as family circumstances, house moves, etc.).

Notice of Placement Ending: There will be times when a placement cannot or should not be saved. The foster carer should give at least 28 days notice.

Disruption Meeting: As indicated above, following notice, or the unplanned ending of a placement, a disruption meeting can be called. The purpose of this is to learn lessons from the incidents and assist in supporting the present/previous or new carer. It is another meeting where it will pay dividends to prepare well; review notes and produce a written report.

Carer Report: When a placement ends, planned or otherwise, it would be of great assistance to the new carer in helping to settle the child if the previous carer were to provide a written report. Areas to cover would be routines, boundaries, behaviour, likes and dislikes and any other topics thought relevant. The BAAF has produced a draft report which is being recommended to produce at time of medical or on change of placement. It currently addresses the emotional and social stability of the child.

Effective Communication

KFCA research with foster carers indicates that many carers feel they are not given sufficient information or included in key decisions affecting their placements. The fact that carers work in isolation from their colleagues, lack legal parental responsibility, and often their communication is limited to formal meetings several times a year, exaggerates this sense of being excluded from the decision making process. This places a responsibility on all those involved in supporting a child to communicate effectively.

The emphasis on professionalism in foster care is to highlight the need for social workers to include foster carers in their planning and decision making. Carers have a responsibility to work closely with social workers and maintain communication at an appropriate level.

To be effective, carers must have the confidence to be assertive in stating their thoughts and have the listening skills to be able to see the other side of the coin. The KFCA are running a series of work shops aimed at assisting carers to acquire additional skills in communicating effectively.

Other ideas to improve communications are:

- Preparation prior to meetings is critical. Consider carefully what the issues are and prepare a written report.
- Make the most of supervision; carers have indicated that building a relationship with their fostering officer pays dividends. They can assist in clarifying issues, act as a sounding board, and provide support to the carer.
- Build a relationship with the child's social worker. Keep the SW informed.
- Communicate issues clearly. If contacting by telephone, keep a record of the phone call, save any emails sent and keep copies of letters.
- Attend all meetings. Note here that social workers booking meetings have a responsibility to ensure carers availability as they do for other professionals.

As foster carers gain experience, confidence will grow in dealing with meetings and other professionals. Training too is an important part of this process.

In an organisation as large and dispersed as Kent Children's Services, there are going to be times when the processes do not work as they should. We are all human; we all make mistakes; we are all busy. When a carer feels they have a grievance with the service, they should address this, in the first instance, with their fostering supervisor. If they are still not satisfied, the appropriate next step would be to formally raise the issue with the team leader, preferably in writing. There is a formal complaints procedure which can be used as a last resort – see The Foster Carers Manual section 1.11.12.

Support for Placements at Risk

KFCA research indicates that most placement disruptions are not caused by single incidents but are a result of a number of smaller incidents which remain unresolved.

Placement disruption is more likely to occur when a carer feels unsupported by the network supporting a child.

We are also aware that those placements at risk of disruption are known to social services.

The Fostering service has agreed to pilot for 3 months from April an alert system which will highlight placements at risk.

This Alert system will put in place a process that will feed back to the carer what the worker is doing/has done to address any potential difficulties raised by the carers. It is recognised that carers need to know that their problems are known, taken seriously and are being addressed.

This alert should be recorded on the carers s/v (supervision) sheet with what action has been agreed and feedback on the outcome of any action agreed should occur within a week by email or telephone to the carer. The supervising social worker will also share this with their manager/supervisor.

A carer will find support available from:

- The child's social worker.
- The carer's fostering officer.
- Support groups: the fostering officer will provide details of support groups available in the area. Carers are encouraged to attend as often as possible and at least 75% of the time.
- **Foster line 0800 0407675** is a confidential advice line for foster carers, which provides independent and impartial advice about fostering issues. It is funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and run in association with the Fostering Network.
- The KFCA can be contacted via the web site www.kfca.org.uk.

By building a network around the above, the carer will gain the help and expertise of people who have dealt with similar circumstances.

Provision of Respite and Day Care

KCC registered foster carers are entitled to two weeks paid annual leave a year. This gives the carer (and child) an opportunity to take time out and recoup their energy. Foster carers will often forego their paid leave, particularly when they have long term placements which are integrated into the family. But when carers have a difficult placement, they should make use of this leave to have a break.

Day care is formally available to enable carers to attend training related to their fostering. The fostering officer can provide claim forms for this.

Fostering sometimes differs from a 'traditional' family unit with parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts etc 'on call' to offer support and respite for natural parents. Respite and

day care offers an alternative to a family's natural respite. However, it does have to be paid for from the C&F budget.

Where possible respite should be negotiated with the social worker and formally recorded at reviews. As children can find respite in stranger's home difficult, it helps to have introductions before respite and if possible to have a regular named respite carer. It is conducive to continuity if the respite carer is able to maintain the routines and boundaries of the child's main carer.

When a placement is at risk of disruption, it can help to prevent disruption by providing respite for the carer. It is important that this is not "overused" as clearly it is not in the child's interest to move placements regularly. However consideration to a family relief carer can also be an effective way to offer a break and 'recharge batteries'.

Requests for respite or day care have to be agreed by the C&F team leader. It is important that the fostering worker is also made aware of this in order that, where appropriate, they can support this request and set it in context.

Managing Challenging Behaviour

Children who come into care have, generally, had life experiences which affect their attitude and behaviour. They are placed in a home which has different expectations, different house rules, and they are away from their families. Some children have mental health issues such as attachment or trauma; some have been abused or neglected. It is not surprising they present challenging behaviour.

There are some things we can collectively do to make life easier for the child and foster carer.

- Improve matching LAC needs with the experience of the foster carer.
- Improving information made available before and at time of placement.
- The foster carer must take appropriate training on behaviour management and other courses agreed with their fostering supervisor.
- Understanding the reason behind the behaviour can help identify ways of changing that behaviour to a more positive approach. Again training and information is the key.
- Support from the Fostering Officer and C&F Social Worker will help the carer to deal with the behaviour.
- Carers need to make the most of supervision to discuss how to deal with issues.
- When appropriate, Network Meetings involving key people including foster carers and mental health representatives can help clarify issues and identify managing techniques.

KCC have produced a [Managing Conflict & Encouraging Positive Behaviour](#) which is an excellent document. The KFCFA have produced a document [Behaviour Management Toolkit](#) which is aimed at highlighting different techniques carers have found useful.

Exclusion From School

A report published in 2004 by the Social Work Research and Development Unit at the University of York entitled 'Patterns and Explanations of Placement stability and Change' found that "*School exclusions featured heavily as a factor in placement breakdowns involving older children.*" The KFCA research with foster carers indicates that children excluded from school create major challenges. The child is demoralised, unmotivated, and challenging. It places the whole household in a difficult position and can affect everyone 24/7.

Legislation changes place the onus on the carer to ensure the child is within the home and constructively occupied for the first 5 days of exclusion. Thereafter, the local authority has the responsibility of providing full time education.

The prevention of exclusion is by far the preferred route and this will require those supporting the child to work closely with the school. Social workers should provide support to carers to work with the school to find alternatives to exclusion. Liaison has proved most successful in this regard and foster carers must be proactive in working with the school; utilise PEP (Personal Education Plans) meetings and reviews to agree support.

The KFCA has produced a document [Education of Looked After Children in Kent Foster Carers Guidelines and Best Practice](#) which places the emphasis on preventing exclusion. It includes information on the procedures, roles and responsibilities and where to get help.

Best practice must again emphasise the need for carers to report all out of school incidents. The Education management can then monitor the incident and take appropriate action. The form **Reasons for Being out of School** ([insert link](#)) is planned to be on line but can currently be returned by post.

Professional Foster Carer

In recent years foster carers have become recognised as part of the children's workforce in England. It has meant a cultural change which is slowly evolving. The importance of the role of foster carers in transforming outcomes for children in care is now recognised by the national government and local authority. Foster carers are seen as central and equal members of the team of skilled child care practitioners focused on planning for, and caring for, a child in care.

The following is extracted from The [Social Worker Guide to the Kent County Council Foster Care System](#); the italics are mine.

"Foster carers paid a professional fee by KCC are considered to be full partners in the foster care endeavour. As such they are entitled to the *same respect, access to information and expectations of confidentiality afforded between social work colleagues*, and can be expected to conduct themselves in this manner."

[Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care](#) have laid down standards of training that all new foster carers should achieve. These will become mandatory in

April 2008. KCC has introduced the Pay 4 Skills programme to encourage carers to achieve profession standards.

The objective of training and development is to ensure a professional foster care service; carers must see themselves as professional and expect to be treated as such.

Useful Links

The [KCC web site](#) has a specific area devoted to fostering. It includes information aimed at recruiting new carers as well as the different types of foster care. The KCC Cluster Web site is [Children's Services](#) has been specifically created to give carers and others access to relevant information including Policies and Guidance, good practice, news etc. This site is a must for all carers.

[The Fostering Network](#) (tFN) is a national charity for people involved in fostering. The KFCA encourages carers to become members as tFN provides support and insurance for foster carers as well as being an independent campaigner for improving fostering and legislation related to fostering. There are many publications available which would be of interest to foster carers.

[The British Association for Adoption and Fostering \(BAAF\)](#) is an organisation for agencies and individuals who have an interest in fostering. They have publications useful to carers as well as providing training and advice to members.

[The Fostering Information Line](#) is a web site aimed at providing basic information to people considering fostering. Their emphasis appears to be on private agencies.

The KCC Foster Carers' Manual is a valuable source of information on-line covering all aspects of fostering. [\(insert link\)](#)

Kent Foster Care Association is a free service run by volunteers who are KCC foster carers. The Association can be accessed via the website www.kfca.org.uk/ by e-mailing support@kfca.org.uk or by telephoning **0705 0641943**.

[Every Child Matters](#) is the national government's legislative approach to improving the life chances of children in care.

Appendix

Appendix 1 Fostering Referral Form

**Kent County Council
Children's Services Provider Unit
Fostering
Service Referral Form**



Part 1 – (to be completed at point of Referral)		Completed By	
Date of Request		Date Placement Required	
Name of Referrer		Name of Allocated Social Worker	
Team		Direct Dial phone Number	

Name of Child	Gender	D.o.B	Ethnicity

Current Address		Home Address	
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Child's Legal Status (including Child Protection & Date put on Register)	
Name of Persons with Parental Responsibility	

Family Composition	
Name of Family Member	Relationship to Child

Reason for Placement Request

Anticipated Length of Placement	
Describe The Type Of Placement Required	

Has Funding Been Approved		By Whom	
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Describe Any Specific Skills Required By The Foster Carers

Has There Been More Than 3 Previous Care Episodes	
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Details Including Reasons For Ending Of Previous Care Episodes		
Name Of Carer	Dates	Reason For End

Has This Child Experienced Loss or Change of Primary Carers In The First 5 Years Of Life? (If Yes Please give Details)

Is This Child Known To Have Been Sexually Abused? (Give Details)

Is This Child Known To Have Sexually Abused Or otherwise Harmed Other Children and/or Animals? (Give Details)

Is This Child Known To Have Started Fires or Damaged Property? (Give Details)

Does This Child Or Those Intending To Visit The Child In The Foster Home

Present Any Known Risks To Foster Carers Or Their Family? (Give Details)

Are There Any Specific Behavioural And Emotional Problems Which Prospective Foster Carers Need To Be Aware Of? (e.g. Substance Abuse, Absconding, Offending Behaviour) Please Give Details

Give A Brief Outline Of The Child Including Positive Points

Outline Any Specific Physical, Educational, Religious or Cultural Needs. E.g. Specific Diet, Mobility etc

Does This Child Need To Be The Youngest/Oldest/Same Gender/Only Child In the Home?

What Are The Expected Contact Arrangements? E.g. Frequency and will it be supervised, in or out of foster home etc

Are There Any Specific Health Considerations? How Are These Managed?

Is This Child Receiving Full Time Education?	
Name Of School and Current Education Plan	
If Excluded – Give Reasons And Time Period.	
Does This Child Require Or Receive Any Form Of Therapy? Give Details	

Is The Child In Agreement With The Care Plan?	
Are The Parents In Agreement With The Care Plan?	

Additional Comments.

Placement Offer (Please Complete When Placement Offered)	
Have The Social Workers For The Children Currently In Placement Been Consulted?	
Name Of Carers	
Date Placement Due To Start	
Name Of Fostering Social Worker	

If No Placement Is Offered, Please State Why:



FOSTERING DUTY MATCHING FORM

Completed ByTeam (e.g. West Kent)

Date.....

Child's name.....

Child's D.o.B.....

Requirements (x if required)	X if met by placement offered, Comments if not met
Placement in specific location (State location) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement with no other children <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement with no younger children <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement with no older children <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement with siblings, can share Bedroom <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement with sibs, but not sharing Bedroom <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement of child and parent Together <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remand Placement <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement in an emergency <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bridge to Adoption placement <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short Term (e.g. Care Proceedings) Placement <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers with experience of disabilities <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers with experience of children who Have been sexually abused <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact frequency requirement State <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact requirement location State..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact Travelling requirement State..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact Supervision requirement State..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



FOSTERING RISK ASSESSMENT FORMAT

Fostering Team (e.g. WK) **Completed by** **Date**.....

Name of child **(boy/girl)**

D.o.B...... **Age**.....

Tick if any of these are specified in the referral:

A. Sexual Behaviour

- Child is exceptionally sexually vulnerable to other child.
- Child poses sexual risk to other children
- Child poses risk of sexual allegations against adults

B. Physical Harm

- Child poses risk of physical harm to other children
- Child poses risk of physical harm to adults
- Child poses risk of physical harm to animals
- Child poses risk of physical harm to themselves
- Child poses risk of physical allegations against adults

C. Fire Setting

- Child poses risk of fire setting in homes
- Child poses risk of fire setting (non-dwellings)

D. Theft

- Child poses risk of theft from homes
- Child poses risk of theft of cars
- Child poses risk of theft in the community

E. Absconding

- Child poses risk of absconding alone
- Child poses risk of absconding (taking other children)

F.

- Child or parents pose other risks to carer's family

DOES REFERRAL MEET CRITERIA FOR SINGLE SUPPLEMENT PLACEMENT Yes

Which of the above areas now require risk assessment?

A		Sexual
B		Physical
C		Fire
D		Theft
E		Absconding
F		Other

Child's name

Specific Risk Assessment of.....(insert area of risk from above)

Brief History of Risk behaviour occurring: (what, when, where, why)

Circumstances which increase likelihood of reoccurrence:

Overall level of risk posed: e.g. High

Overall likelihood of occurrence: e.g. High

Provisions to reduce risk could include:
*

*
*

*

Placement identified:

Risk minimising Provisions in this placement :
*

*

*

*

*

Placement need not met because
*

*

*

Appendix 2 Foster Carers Profile

Date Completed: _____



FOSTER CARERS PROFILE

Name(s) of Carer(s):

Address:

Date approved as Foster Carers for KCC

Current Approval

Years of Fostering Experience

1. Description of your home/garden and location

2. Who lives in your home
(Please give names, age, relationship; do you have children that have moved away?)

3. How would you describe your family life
(Noisy?, quiet?, active?, etc. etc.) What do you like to do on a typical weekend?
What are your leisure pursuits?

4. Do you have any pets? (Please give details)

5. Please describe your experience in fostering (which age group do you usually foster?)

6. Can you describe what specific skills and experience you have developed in your fostering career? (What do you feel you are good at?)

7. What could a fostered child expect from you and your family – regarding roles, rules and expectations of others?

8. How do you work with children to encourage educational achievement?

Appendix 3 – Contents of Foster Carer’s Report

Here are some guidelines on how to construct a report for a child’s meeting. It is a handy framework to follow either for a Looked After Child review or for a Child Protection review. If a carer has something prepared then it helps to keep things focused. A report is also helpful if the carer is unable to attend a meeting as it can be passed to the Social Worker and read out at the meeting instead.

Placement - include how long the child/children has/have been with the carer, include a summary of what routines are set in place and comment on whether these are followed by the child/children. Give a general summary of how they are, e.g. have become more chatty, can play with others; highlight any concerns, i.e. will isolate themselves, will not share even though this has been worked on etc. Include any accidents that have occurred in placement and how these were dealt with, e.g. went to hospital, treatment, child’s Social Worker informed, or ‘fell over in garden sustained knee injury’; ensure all are recorded in fostering record book.

Health - list all health appointments that the child/children have attended or that have been made. It is also a good idea to mention in this section if any problems have been highlighted, e.g. glasses needed and what steps have been taken to rectify this. Also mention in this section about the child/children’s general health since being in placement, if they are well or not and any change in clothes size, shoe size, weight or height (this would indicate in a neglect case that the children can thrive in the right environment).

Education - this just needs to be an overall picture, e.g. ‘they are going to school regularly’, discuss what communication is like with the school if this is needed, e.g. home to school books etc, or child being on report; any events that they have taken part in at school. If the carer attended parents evening, how did that go (it might be an idea to check with the child/children’s Social Worker that parents had been informed of this too). Homework - is it done, does the child concentrate well, do they ask for help? etc.

Contact - Outline arrangements for the child/children, e.g. face to face contact or phone. How often it occurs and what the child/children are like afterwards.

Any other comments – in this section carers have the chance to report how they and their family find the child/children and to report on all the positives they have observed over the weeks/months since the placement began. If the placement has been negative carers should speak to their fostering officer first and gain assistance to complete this section if necessary.