POLICY FOR PARENT AND BABY PLACEMENTS

1 Policy Statement

1.1 Aims and Objectives of this Policy

This Parent and Baby Placement Policy has been written to ensure that all Foster Carers, Fostering Social Workers, Parents and Child’s Social Workers share the same understanding of the placement task they are going to undertake.

Cornerways Foster Carers are able to provide Parent and Baby/Child placements for babies and/or children and their parent(s). These will generally be time-limited placements to provide guidance and assistance to the parent(s), aid assessment and keep the baby(ies)/child safe.

If a parent and baby are to be placed in foster care together it must be on the basis that the parent will provide the primary care for the child - albeit with support from the carer. Violence, or threat of violence, will not be tolerated and will result in cessation of placement. Smoking, alcohol and or drug abuse will not be tolerated in the foster home. The foster carer will have use of the Cornerways Fostering Services Out of Hours Support Service.

Where parent and baby placements are made where both are Looked After Children, the needs of both as children must be considered and met in keeping with an ordinary foster placement, whilst there may be the additional aspects of the placement having parent and child placement tasks, such being specified in the placement agreement.

2 Preparation for Placement

2.1 Prior to placement

Prior to placement, a placement planning meeting should be held to establish the expectations of the Court, social workers, the carer(s), the parent and any other professionals involved. Cornerways expects Local Authorities to provide all relevant information on parent(s) in respect of risk; violence, alcohol and or drug use, mental health.
Cornerways Fostering Services will complete their own Placement Plan alongside the local authority’s paperwork to ensure all aspects of care are addressed, unless the Local Authority has a document that meets very similar issues. A placement risk assessment will be completed prior to placement by the fostering social worker, using information from the LA. This will include risk minimizing actions within the foster home and by the carers, parents, etc.

At the meeting the following will be discussed:

- Purpose and potential outcomes of the placement
- Parental obligations and expectations
- Local Authority’s expectations of the placement and Local Authority’s obligations
- Foster Carer’s expectations of parent(s) and obligations during the placement
- Timescales
- Contact arrangements

It is essential for there to be clear guidelines about the role and responsibility of the parent and the carer as well as the roles and responsibilities of the professionals agencies and authorities involved.

The fostering social worker will make available to the child’s social worker Cornerways Complaints Procedure and a guide to parent and child foster placements.

Parents may bring their own baby equipment (eg. cots and mattresses) to the placement but it must be considered safe and sound by the foster carer, Cornerways and the Local Authority. Unsafe items will not be used and the parent will be expected to comply and use equipment provided to them for the duration of the placement. Baby’s mattress must be clean, firm, flat and waterproof, and anything that does not meet these expectations must not be used.

2.2 Expectations of Parent(s)

As the primary carer the parent will generally be expected to attend to their baby’s needs – getting baby up, washed, dressed, fed, attending parent & baby groups, the family centre, the health clinic etc. The parent will be expected to demonstrate their ability to manage a routine, interact positively with their child, and attend to the child’s needs appropriately alongside keeping their living space clean and tidy, washing and ironing their own and their baby(ies) child’s clothes and bedding at regular intervals and managing their finances.

The parent will need to know the carer(s) current routine in order to fit in with the household. Thus the carer(s) need to be clear about times to get up, wash, cook, go to bed etc. The parent will need to know what their financial allowance will be if required to do their own purchasing of food and cooking. It is essential that the parent is aware of this so that they may budget for their own needs.

Clarification should be given, in accordance with Cornerways allowances structure, as to what the carer will be expected to provide financially for the baby and what the parent is expected to provide.

The parent may request or be provided with (where possible) a separate space in the kitchen for their food supply.
A DBS check will be required for any parent (aged 18+) moving into a parent and baby placement. The Local Authority will be expected to assist in providing acceptable documentation to achieve this.

2.3 Expectations of Foster Carer(s)

The foster carer(s) will be expected to offer guidance and assistance to the Parent(s) in managing the care tasks for the baby/child. This may include direct instruction or modeling, it may include responding to questions, or practical support such as accompanying the parent(s) to parent/baby groups, health appointments, visiting clinics, shopping etc.

The foster carer(s) will be expected to show the parent(s) how any technical appliances work so that they are able to use any cooking and cleaning facilities appropriately.

If the placement progresses positively it will be expected that the parent(s) demonstrate less reliance on the carer(s) support.

The foster carer(s) will be expected to keep a daily record noting observations of the parent’s ability to respond to the child’s needs, manage the routine, manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, shopping, budgeting etc. These observations will inform the social work core assessment. Records will reflect the Assessment Framework dimensions and the Every Child Matters Five Outcomes as appropriate. These should be maintained on Cornerways Parenting Capacity recording sheets (appendix 1) or alternative recording forms provided by the Local Authority, as agreed at placement planning meeting. These must be forwarded to the social worker regularly, generally each week, or more frequently if the local authority requires. These recordings should be shared with the parent(s) by the foster carer. Careful consideration will need to be given to whether the carer needs to supervise parent and baby at all times or whether the parent needs to ‘check in’ with the carer every so many hours etc.

Because the carer will be paid an allowance for the baby, he/she will need to know when to buy items such as milk, nappies etc. It is important to clarify at the placement planning meeting whose responsibility it is to ensure that these items are monitored, purchased, etc.

The carer(s) need for respite, day care or any form of support, will need to be discussed with as much notice as possible and appropriate arrangements made as necessary, prioritizing the needs of any child in the placement. Cornerways is committed to providing day care support to these placements to enable carers to attend training and/or carer groups and family needs.

The child/baby’s social worker (or their manager or duty worker) must be informed of any child protection concerns immediately, if this is out-of-hours then the local authority EDT team must be informed by the carer, as well as them informing Cornerways without delay.

2.4 Expectations of Fostering Social Worker

A Cornerways Fostering Social Worker should visit the placement regularly for the first month. During these visits the social worker should check that the child/baby is well, developing appropriately, attaching to the parent and being kept safe at all times.
The fostering social worker should discuss with the foster carer(s) their recorded observations to ensure that records are fair, objective and helpful to the assessment process so that any planned intervention remains relevant to the objectives developed.

The fostering social worker must check that the room the baby is sleeping in is safe and that the bedding is clean.

The fostering social worker should check that the parent is participating appropriately with the agreed plan and whether the foster carer(s) have any concerns, anxieties or difficulties that need to be addressed. The fostering social worker may support the carer in sharing their diary records with the parent in placement.

The fostering social worker should establish that all appointments have been kept by the parent in relation to their child/baby's development.

Should any disagreements arise within the placement a joint visit will be arranged between the fostering social worker and the child's social worker.

The child/baby’s social worker (or their manager or duty worker) must be informed of any child protection concerns immediately, if this is out-of-hours then the local authority EDT team must be informed by the carer, as well as them informing Cornerways without delay.

2.5 Expectations of Baby and or Child's Social Worker

The child/baby's social worker should visit the placement regularly (at least every four weeks). During these visits the social worker should check that the child/baby is well, developing appropriately, attaching to the parent and being kept safe at all times. Dates for these meetings should be agreed between all parties at the placement agreement meeting.

Child's Social Worker should check out any arranged appointments and childcare cover that needs to be met by carers.

Should any disagreements arise within the placement a joint visit will be arranged between the fostering social worker and the child's social worker. If necessary, the child's social worker will then arrange a meeting to include parent(s), fostering social worker and carer(s) and team manager.

Child’s Social Worker to ensure Cornerways Fostering Services and the foster carer have all relevant information/paperwork by pre-placement planning meeting, and that this is updated during the placement where changes or new information is known.

If there are any risk issues that should be addressed by notifying the Police of the placement being made, then this should be done without delay by the social worker to ensure the safety of the child and the fostering household.

3 Contact

3.1 Contact Arrangements

Contact may be determined by Court. If not, the Local Authority should manage contact within
the context of the baby(ies)/child’s needs, taking into account routine feeds and sleeping times. If another parent or family member is available to the baby but not placed with the foster carer arrangements will need to be made for contact. Whilst the foster carer will have a part to play in managing contact arrangements for any baby/child in placement with them, they do not automatically have responsibility for facilitating contact between a parent in placement and any other child that parent may have elsewhere where the contact is not for the baby in placement.

Where contact involves anyone coming to the foster home, this should be risk assessed before it is arranged and clearly planned and agreed with the local authority and the foster carer. The foster carers own home, routines and household must be respected in contact arrangements.

3.2 Risk Assessments and Health and Safety

At the outset of the placement a risk assessment will be undertaken by Cornerways using information supplied by the local authority (and any other relevant agencies), this will need to be revised if there are any changes to the situation or new information comes to light. Risk assessment will include any risk to the baby/child, the parent or to any one else in the carers household.

Risk assessments must be made regarding where the baby/child sleeps, how night-time is managed, and when and how the carer should ever intervene to preserve the baby/child’s safety.

The Cornerways Health and Safety policy will be followed. In addition there needs to be attention given to the equipment used for babies. Cots must be fully functioning and robust. Cot mattresses used must follow the lullaby trust advice. Generally cot mattresses should be new and have a waterproof cover, but if not new, it must have a waterproof cover and be very clean. Mattresses must not have any tears, holes or sagging. Any other baby equipment must be considered for safety (high chairs, baby seats, sterilizing equipment) and follow current health visitor advice.

Depending on the characteristics of the relationship between the parents any contact arrangements made should be facilitated entirely by the Local Authority. It is important that any arrangements are clearly defined at the placement planning meeting and that risk assessments are completed. This should consider any long term risks to the foster carer, their family, current or future children in placement, as well as current risk issues.

4 When Placements End or Change

4.1 Parent(s) Leaving The Foster Placement: If the parent leaves the foster placement (and the placement and child placement thus ends) but the baby(ies)/child(ren) remains, the foster carer fee payable will be for the baby(ies)/child(ren) only.

4.2 At the end of the placement the foster carer must pass any savings, and remaining/accruing allowances (clothing or pocket money) to the child’s social worker or to Cornerways Fostering Services.
At the end of the placement, if the local authority requires further contracted support from the foster carer(s) this is to be formally requested, discussed and agreed if both the carer and Cornerways concur with the plan. An on-going formal involvement should be appropriately risk assessed.

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