

FOSTERING AGENCY TRANSFERS

Children's Social Care

These procedures are supplementary and directly linked to the Recruitment, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Procedures. These supplementary procedures set out specific requirements relating to enquiries and applications to become a Foster Carer for Plymouth's Fostering Service where the enquirer / applicant is already a Foster Carer but for a different Fostering Agency.

N.B. Foster Carers may transfer from an Independent Fostering Agency or from another Local Authority Fostering Service. For the purpose of these procedures the Independent Fostering Agency and Local Authority Service will be referred to as 'Fostering Agency'.

I. Recruiting Foster Carers from other Fostering Agencies

I.1 No member of the Fostering Service is to approach a Foster Carer working for another Fostering Agency specifically to persuade them to move from that Fostering Agency to Plymouth's Fostering Service.

I.2 In an exception it is admissible for a staff member involved in an advertised recruitment campaign in a public area to approach a known Foster Carer for another Fostering Agency if they are in the vicinity of the stand. The Foster Carer would exercise their own free will to engage in discussion about fostering for Plymouth or not.

I.3 Plymouth's Fostering Service is not to specifically forward recruitment literature to home addresses of known Foster Carers for other Fostering Agencies unless specifically requested by that Foster Carer.

I.4 Plymouth's Fostering Service may advertise for Foster Carers via radio, television, circulars, websites and newspapers. In the course of this the Fostering Service may state that they are interested in hearing from anyone who is currently fostering in order to advise them of the benefits of fostering for the Plymouth Fostering Service.

I.5 Specifically, when an Independent Fostering Agency that Plymouth has placements with decides to merge or is taken over by another Independent Fostering Agency, the Foster Carers are to be afforded the right and opportunity to consider all their options and decide who they would like to foster for. The established network protocol on movement between IFAs with existing placements sets this out.

I.6 If an Independent Fostering Agency ceases to operate within the Plymouth Local Authority area and does not make arrangements with another provider to take over its service, each of their approved Foster Carers will, by default, become Foster Carers for Plymouth City Council Fostering Service. The Fostering Service then must decide within 16 weeks whether or not to re-approve them after following the assessment process.

Where it is not possible to complete the approval within 16 weeks the period can be extended to enable the assessment process to be complete.

1.7 Plymouth Fostering Service reserves the right to approach Foster Carers from Independent Fostering Agencies who are merging or being taken over, if they are within 20 miles/50 minutes drive of Plymouth, to enquire if they wish to transfer to Plymouth's Fostering Service. However, these Foster Carers must be without placements or have children in placement from Plymouth. The placing authority are fundamental to the Foster Carers transfer process and are to be included to ensure that the needs of the child remain served by the Foster Carers.

2. Initial Enquiries

2.1 When an enquiry is received by Plymouth Fostering Team from a Foster Carer for another Fostering Agency (IFA or other Local Authority), the Fostering Recruitment Advisor is to advise them that legally no Foster Carer can foster for more than one Fostering Agency, therefore if they wish to foster for Plymouth Fostering Service they are to at a later point have to resign as Foster Carers for their current Fostering Agency.

2.2 The Fostering Recruitment Advisor will send the enquirer an Information Pack regarding fostering for Plymouth, regardless of their experience of being a Foster Carer.

2.3 The Fostering Recruitment Advisor will arrange for an Assessing Social Worker to contact the Foster carer within 24 hours and an Initial Visit will be arranged. The Social Worker will explain the Plymouth Offer, allowances (mainstream allowance will be offered unless specifically agreed by the Fostering Service Manager

2.3 When the enquirer is a Foster Carer for another Fostering Agency and they have a child or young person currently placed with them from Plymouth, the Fostering Service is to provide an Information Pack. The Fostering Recruitment Advisor or an Assessing Social Worker will offer information regarding the transfer process and information regarding the protection of payment arrangements on offer. Transition/Protection of payments arrangements apply if the Foster Carers were to make a formal application and successfully become approved as Foster carers for the Plymouth Fostering Service.

2.4 The Plymouth Fostering Service is under no obligation to inform the Foster Carers current Fostering Agency if they visit to informally discuss fostering for Plymouth. However if the enquirer decides to make a formal application to become a Foster Carer for the Plymouth Fostering Service, they are to be advised that on receipt of their application, the Plymouth Fostering Service will contact the current Fostering Agency to inform them of the application and to take up references.

2.5 If the Initial Visit is positive, the Foster Carer(s) will be verbally informed that we will be inviting them to apply and this will be followed up in writing with an Application Form. Foster Carer(s) to be informed that on completion of their application, they will

need to inform their current agency of their intent to be assessed by Plymouth as prospective Foster Carer(s) and of their intent to transfer if they are successful.

2.6 If the Initial Visit is negative, the Foster Carers will be informed by telephone and a supporting letter sent to confirm that no invitation to apply will be sent. If a Plymouth child is currently in placement, the decision must also be sent to the child's Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager/Head of Service for them to consider any impact this may have on the current placements.

3. Reassessment of Foster Carers who wish to become Foster Carers for Plymouth's Fostering Service

3.1 Although the applicant may remain as a Foster Carer for their current Fostering Agency the application is not an automatic guarantee that they will be deemed suitable as a Foster Carers for Plymouth's Fostering Service. The applicants are therefore to be subjected to the full assessment processes as outlined in section 2 of the Recruitment, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carer procedures. A BAAF form F assessment is to take place whilst the applicant remains registered with their current Fostering Agency.

3.2 Upon receipt of the application; Team Manager will review and make a decision about accepting the application; confirmation is sent in writing and Stage 2 is triggered on receipt of completed Application Form and an Assessing Social Worker allocated. Fostering Recruitment Advisor will speak to the Foster Carer(s) to ensure that the current agency have received the Notification of Intent prior to the request for Agency reference being sent.

3.3 If the existing Fostering Agency agrees to share their own assessment of the Foster Carers in the form of the Foster Carer(s) BAAF Form F; the Assessing Social Worker will complete an Addendum to the Form F to update the assessment. The Assessing Social Worker can take account of the information obtained by the existing provider as long as they are satisfied as to its quality and continuing relevance.

3.4 Where there is a child or children currently placed with the Foster Carer(s), the Foster Carer(s) must give written notice of their intent to consider transferring to another agency to both the current agency and the placing authority/authorities for the children. Upon receipt of this notice, the placing Local Authority (Authorities) must inform the child's Independent Reviewing Officer and shall convene a Transfer Protocol Meeting within 28 days. The Transfer Protocol Meeting will be chaired by the Fostering Team Manager and must include the Social Worker for each child, current fostering agency, recruiting agency, Foster Carer(s). Decisions from this meeting are to be sent out within three working days.

3.5 Once the applicant has agreed to the minutes of the Transfer Protocol Meeting and returns a signed copy via email or post; references will be gathered. Fostering Recruitment Advisor will request the Agency Reference (using Plymouth Form); the current agency should provide the recruiting agency with a comprehensive written

reference within twenty days. The Foster Carer(s) should be given a copy of the reference by their current agency unless there are reasons relating to the safeguarding of children which prevents this. If the current agency does not respond within twenty days, the Fostering Service Manager will send a letter via commissioning requesting an immediate response and this to be escalated to Head of Service if required.

3.6 If a positive Agency Reference is received the assessment will continue to Fostering Panel. If a negative Agency Reference is received the assessment will cease until the information has been further investigated. Fostering Team Manager to discuss the outcome with the Fostering Service Manager and refer to LADO if necessary. The decision must also be sent to the child's Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager/Head of Service for them to consider any impact this may have on the current placements.

3.7 Attendance at Plymouth Skills to Foster training will be offered but is not compulsory for transfers. However, this may be given as a condition of accepting the application in some cases.

3.8 All applicants will attend Plymouth Fostering Panel; there are two types of paperwork required depending on circumstances, DBS checks on all adult household members will be required in both circumstances and medicals will not be required if completed within the last three years:

Type 1 - Short update Report: If Foster Carer(s) have in the last twelve months been matched long term with a specific Plymouth child (and therefore have attended Plymouth Fostering Panel) then a short report outlining any changes or updates since this Panel presentation will suffice (If there has been a significant change of circumstances since this approval, such as an allegation, then type 2 will apply). Type 1 paperwork should be completed within four weeks of receipt of completed Agency Reference and Form F; Fostering Panel should take place within eight to ten weeks.

Type 2 – Addendum Report and References: All other agency Foster Carer(s) will require an addendum report to be submitted together with the most recent Form F. Updating references will be sought from the original personal referees or from individuals who have experience of their fostering. Type 2 paperwork should be completed within eight weeks of receipt of completed Agency Reference and Form F; Fostering Panel should take place within twelve weeks.

3.9 On the day of the Agency Decision Maker ratification of Foster Carer approval for Plymouth, the Foster Carer(s) are to be transferred to Plymouth's Fostering Service. The Foster Carer(s) are required to submit their resignation in writing to their current agency giving 28 days notice, in order that they transfer on the date of the ADM decision. The de-resignation as a Foster Carer from the existing Fostering Agency is to coincide with their new registration with Plymouth Fostering Service, with the provision that if they are not approved by Plymouth's Fostering Service they are to revert to their

current registration status with the existing Fostering Agency. This is especially crucial when a child is in placement.

3.10 If the Foster Carers withdraw during the reassessment, are not approved by Plymouth Fostering Panel or the Agency Decision Maker, they may remain as Foster Carers with their current fostering agency. However the current agency may decide independently to deregister them or the Foster Carers themselves may resign as Foster Carers. Special Consideration is to be given to any children in the care of the Foster Carers. The decision must also be sent to the child's Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager/Head of Service for them to consider any impact this may have on the current placements.

4. Finances where a Plymouth child already registered to another Fostering Agency.

4.1 If a transferring Foster Carer has a child from Plymouth in placement, agreement will be sought from the Service Manager to match the remuneration the Foster Carers received at their current Fostering Agency unless this is less than the allowance assessed by the Plymouth Fostering Service.

4.2 Any Foster Carer transferring from a Fostering Agency to Plymouth's Fostering Service with a Plymouth child in placement is to have protected payments for at least 18 months.

4.3 Any subsequent placements will be assessed in line with Plymouth's Needs Criteria.

5. Support to Foster Carers after transferring to Plymouth

5.1 A Supervising Social Worker will be allocated upon approval and a handover visit with the Assessing Social Worker will take place.

5.2 All Foster Carers transferring to Plymouth will be allocated an experienced Foster Carer Buddy who will be available to support the Foster Carer with their transfer and knowledge of Plymouth processes.

5.3 Foster Carers transferring to Plymouth will be provided with a Welcome Information Pack.

5.4 Supervising Social Worker will ensure that Foster Carers have details of training, Forum and Support Group dates.

5.5 Fostering Reviewing Officer will complete an Annual Review within twelve months and the Supervising Social Worker will present to Plymouth Fostering Panel for a first year review.