

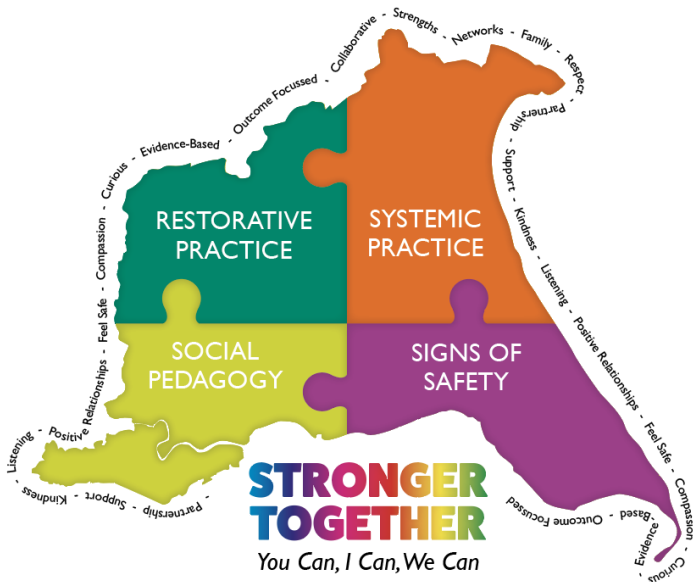


EAST RIDING
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Children and Young People Support and Safeguarding Services

You Can, I Can, We Can

Assessing New Partners of Existing Single Foster Carers Procedure



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Aim and Scope..... | 1 |
| 2. When to Begin an Assessment..... | 1/2 |
| 3. The Four stages | |
| 3.1. Stage One – Initial stages of the relationship..... | 2 |
| 3.2. Stage Two – The new partner intends to become a visitor to the foster home..... | 3 |
| 3.3. Stage Three – The new partner visits and stays over at the foster home when the foster children are present and other scenarios..... | 3/4 |
| 3.4. Stage Four – The new Partner moves into foster home..... | 4/5 |

1. Aim and Scope

This guidance is provided to ensure consistency in the approach to assessing a new partner of an existing single foster carer.

Single foster carers will on occasion form new partnerships and significant relationships. Whilst [Claire's Law](#) exists for all members of the public to make an informed decision about the suitability of new partners, there are additional requirements for foster carers because of the care they provide to vulnerable children and young people.

We have confidence in our foster carers to take steps to ensure the continued safety and wellbeing of children in their care, therefore this procedure has been developed to inform and assist foster carers through the various aspects of a new relationship in the context of their caring role.

Whilst this procedure aims to ensure the continuous safety and protection of children and young people residing within foster care settings, it also acts as a crucial guide to foster carers by setting out how we can all maintain high standard in practice, during a potentially significant transition period. Whilst this procedure outlines some clear expectations in relation to what should happen within the key stages of a new relationship, social workers will aim to work in a collaborative and supportive way, to empower foster carers. Ensuring the successful implementation of this procedure.

Definition: For the purpose of this document, definition of partner is; a significant person with whom the foster carer has/intends/expects to develop a relationship, which is committed and serious.

This guidance is not intended to cover occasional dating situations which occur outside of the foster home and do not involve a cared for child.

For safe caring reasons, an 'assessment' of the new partner is required, and a discussion/decision is needed around the following factors:

- When to start an assessment;
- What to include in an assessment.

2. When to begin an Assessment

If a foster carer is single at the point of application, their initial approval should explore what would happen should they form a new partnership or a significant relationship. For foster carer who experience separation or divorce whilst fostering, new relationships should be covered as part of their reassessment as a single foster carer.



To promote the safety of children and young people living in the care of a foster carer, the foster carer should have awareness of the three key points below;

- The foster carers new relationship will progress within the context of a Safe Caring Policy;
- The foster carer will continue to maintain good communication with the fostering social worker and inform the social worker about the in a new relationship;
- The carer should be aware that an assessment would be needed **at some time**, dependent on the progression of the relationship.

The timing of such an assessment is important although it is recognised that the fostering social worker may be asking the foster carer to decide upon the 'status' of their relationship, before the 'natural course of events' has occurred. We understand that this is a difficult position for foster carer to be in. However, the nature of fostering and the safe caring issues involved are such that the foster carer and the foster carers new partner, will understand the importance of this approach.

There are different stages of a relationship, and it is recognised different levels of assessment will be needed at each stage. For the purpose of this policy, the relationship has been defined in four different stages, but it is accepted that the progress of the relationship between the stages, will vary for each individual situation. This staged procedure has been adopted to provide a clear and a consistent approach to support foster carers.

3. The Four Different Stages Require Different Assessments

3.1 Stage one: Initial stages of the relationship (i.e.) no contact with foster child or the family home.

Foster Carer and Social Worker Requirements / What we will do:

- The Foster carer will inform the fostering social worker that they are beginning a relationship. The fostering social worker will work collaboratively with the foster carer to explore and consider the impact of this new relationship upon the foster carer and will work with the foster carer to address issues, if and when identified;
- The Fostering social worker will inform / explain to the foster carer that an assessment will be needed as/when/if the relationship progresses;
- Fostering social worker recommends that the foster carer informs the new partner of her/his fostering status and that this will lead to a future assessment should the relationship progress. The fostering social worker can provide advice, guidance and support to the foster carer as requested.



3.2 Stage Two: The new partner intends to become a visitor to the foster home.

Foster Carer and Social Worker Requirements / What we will do:

Before any visit takes place to the home:

- When there are intentions for the foster carers new partner to visit the home, The foster carer will inform the fostering social worker of the new partners plans to visit the home prior to the first visit;
- The fostering social worker will meet the new partner to provide information and explain the assessment process and the need for statutory checks to be undertaken;
- An application to the Disclosure and Baring Service, for an enhanced disclosure will be made, (DBS). It is important that foster carers are aware that their new partner should not be introduced to the cared for children before the outcome of the enhanced check is known.
- Once visits by the new partner to the home begin, the foster carer will supervise the new partners contact with the cared for children at all times, to maintain safety for the children;
- The child's social worker will talk to the cared for child/ren about the new partner to gain their understanding and views, ensuring that their lived experience and express wishes are gathered.

3.3 Stage Three: The new partner visits and stays over at the foster home when the foster children are present. This also applies if the fostering family are going on holiday with the new partner or the fostering family is visiting and staying over at the new partner's address.

Foster Carer and Social Worker Requirements / what we will do:

- It is important that the foster carer is aware that the outcome of Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check must be known before any such visit can take place, to ensure safe caring standards are maintained.
- At this stage of the relationship, there will be consideration given to the new partner making an application to foster. The fostering social worker will discuss this with the new partner and existing foster carer to gain their views and wishes.
- Should the new partner agree to make an application, statutory checks, and references (two personal and one paid employment) will be gathered.

The fostering social worker will also seek references from former partner(s) children parented, as/if applicable;



- New partner will be provided with Skills to Foster Training, to support their understanding of the role and promote successful outcomes;
- A Confidentiality Statement should be signed by the new partner;
- The fostering social worker will ensure that the new partner has awareness of the allegations/complaints procedures and provided with this information;
- The fostering social worker will review the Safe Caring Policy for the foster household to reflect the change in household composition.

A risk assessment will be undertaken which will take account of, amongst other things;

- The number, and ages of the children residing in the care setting and their views about the foster carers partner.
- The perceived significance and stability of the relationship, (including how long they have known each other).
- The foster carers history of fostering.
- The frequency of planned overnight stays should also be discussed;
- The fostering social worker, in conjunction with the foster carer and the new partner, confirm the involvement of the new partner in respect of childcare responsibilities within the household, the new partner should **not** have sole care of any cared for child until the outcomes of all of the checks outlined above are available.

The outcome of the risk assessment will require approval from the Fostering Service Area Team Manager, prior to any visits to the home, including visits to the new partners home and any overnight stays, including holidays.

3.4 Stage Four: The new partner wishes to move into the foster home.

Foster Carer and Social Worker Requirements / what we will do:

- All checks listed in Stage three above must be completed and returned with satisfactory outcomes prior to the new partner taking residence in the home.
- The Fostering Social Worker will progress a joint Form F assessment
- The assessment will form part of the foster carers review process and once approved, annual Reviews will take place as from that approval date.

The new assessment with the new partner will especially consider the following strands;



- a. Individual profile/background history/ previous relationships with significant adults/children;
- b. Relationship strengths between the couple, dynamics of the partnership and impact of the partnership within the foster care household;
- c. The dynamics of the relationship with the cared for child/ren;
- d. The joint competence (new partner and existing foster carer) to care safely for children, commitment to fostering and the potential to work in partnership with the fostering service.
- e. Checks and references will not be required for the existing foster carer unless there are specific reasons the assessor requires these, or unless they are out of or nearing out of Date (eg Disclosure and Barring Service, Medical)

The new Form F assessment should be presented to the fostering panel with a recommendation as to the suitability to foster as a couple, along with a copy of the existing foster carers last Review.



Document Control:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Document owner: | Paul Elliott |
| Document number: | 1 |
| Document category: | Workforce |
| Document location: | B Drive – CYPSSS_PII |
| Issued by: | Not applicable |
| Last edited: | November 2022 |

Record of Ammendments:

| Date | Version | Amended by | Description of changes |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

