

## **Assessment of Support Carers known to Existing Foster Carers**

### **Introduction:**

This policy has been written to cover those situations when a foster child stays with a person known to the foster family but who is not a same age friend as described in the sleep over policy. This paper suggests that we extend the principles of the sleep over policy to include these other situations.

It is acknowledged that respite care is a particularly useful part of the support network for foster carers and children alike. It can be best achieved if children can go to stay with members of the carer's own extended family. The children will already know the carers and the arrangement can become part of normal family life.

Many stays of one or two nights duration with family and friends known to the carers and the children should be dealt with under the 'Sleep over ' policy. The risk assessment will be based on the knowledge the main carer has of the family and the information gained from a visit by the fostering social worker. There will be no need to record a change of placement on SSIS and no payments will be made by the department. A CRB check will not be made, though SSIS should be checked. The main carer will be responsible for ensuring that day to day costs are covered from the fostering allowance.

The carer should discuss their proposed arrangements in advance with the fostering social worker and with the child's social worker. If appropriate, particularly for those in Section 20 Care, the child's parent should be told.

These arrangements can also extend to periodic stays of one or two weeks; if they are relatively infrequent, if the child is in a long term placement, is relatively settled and is well known to the family member.

In these circumstances the carer should be visited by either the child's social worker or by the fostering social worker. The sleeping arrangements should be seen, safe caring should be discussed particularly if there is to be sharing of bedrooms, information about the child should be shared on a need to know basis. Information about caring for someone else's child should be discussed. The carers should have contact details for both the main carers and the social workers. The social worker overall approach should be to act like a good parent. The main carer should give a financial contribution to the support carer.

If a long term carer requires regular periods of respite and cannot identify a family member or who cannot meet the conditions specified above then a respite carer will be identified from the fostering resource. Periods spent with a mainstream respite carer will be entered on SSIS and the respite carer will receive the appropriate fostering allowance. Usually the fostering payments to the main carers will cease.

If a member of a foster carer's extended family wishes to offer regular periods of ongoing respite that extend beyond the conditions envisaged in the 'sleep over' policy, a mini fostering assessment will have to be carried out and the information gained should come to the fostering panel. Guidance about the level of assessment can be gained from the 'new' partner policy. The fostering team manager will determine the level of assessment that is needed.

June 2007