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| 1. | **Introduction:** |
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|  | The Fostering Services Regulations (2011), Section 17 (1) states: “The Fostering Service provider shall provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.”  The National Minimum Standards (2011) states:    “21.6) All foster carers have access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice, to enable them to provide consistent, high quality care to the child. This includes assistance with dealing with relevant services, such as health and education. Consideration is given to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers.  21.7) The role of the supervising social worker is clear both to the worker and the foster carer.” |
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|  | Within Northamptonshire Children’s Trust there are a number of ways that the Fostering Service works with, and supports our foster carers, including the provision of supervision. Other support to complement supervision of foster carers includes, but is not restricted to,:   * Support to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs). * Access to local foster care support groups, to include locality support groups and specialist support groups for single carers, carers caring for children with disabilities, carers caring for separated children and carers who are part of or who are caring for children who are party of the LGBTQAI + community. * Support of the Virtual School Team in dealing with school/education, including support for a child/young person who is experiencing difficulties in school, or is excluded from school. * Targeted input from specialist Fostering Family Support Workers (FFSWs) to support the fostering placement, including management of contact, specific activity with a child/young person to build their confidence and self-esteem, therapeutic parenting techniques and responses to support placement stability, etc. * Placement Planning Meetings to enable plans, care arrangements and support services for a child/young person to be clearly identified with foster carers. * A Personal Development Plan (PDP) put in place for each foster carer to meet their individual training and development needs. * ‘Research in Practice’ membership. * The Fostering Network’ membership. * Specialist therapeutic training and support delivered by an externally commissioned service. * Access to ‘E-Learning’ library of resources. |

2. **Policy:**

In-line with Standard 21 – National Minimum Standards (2011): *“*Foster carers receive the support and supervision they need in order to care properly for children placed with them”, all foster carers’ approved with Northamptonshire Children’s Trust will be supervised by a named, appropriately qualified supervising social worker (SSW) and have access to other professional support, information and advice to enable them to provide consistent, high quality care for a child or young person placed in her or his home.

A signed Foster Carer agreement will be in place for each foster carer approved with Northamptonshire Children’s Trust. This Foster Carer Agreement will be amended to reflect any permanent approval changes to the foster carer’s approval status.

A Foster Care Agreement and a supervision agreement will be established with each approved foster care household, which will outline the frequency of supervision meetings, the standing agenda items and arrangements for recording of supervision. This agreement must be signed by both the foster carer, and both foster carers where this is a two-carer household, and the supervising social worker.

In setting up a Foster Care Agreement, a supervision agreement will be established with each approved foster carer household, which will outline the frequency of supervision meetings, the standing agenda items and arrangements for recording of supervision. **This agreement must be signed by both the foster carer, both foster carers where this is a two-carer household, and the supervising social worker**. Where any frequency of supervision is agreed outside of this supervision policy, this needs to be authorised and signed by the Registered Manager.

Supervision meetings within the first twelve months of initial approval need to be held on a four-weekly basis as an absolute minimum and will be subject to review and further agreement at the initial Foster Carer Annual Review. The frequency of subsequent supervision meetings after the foster carers’ initial Annual Review has been undertaken will be NO less than once every three months as outlined in the table below .

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| Foster Carer approved under 12 months | 4 weekly supervision |
| Foster Carer over 12 months | 6 weekly supervision |

This frequency of supervision will apply across all of the children in the fostering household so where a fostering household has been settled with no movement of children, supervision can be undertaken at six weekly intervals. However, when a new child moves into the fostering household, the frequency of the foster carers’ supervision will reset to four weekly intervals for the initial twelve months of that child’s foster placement, irrespective of the length of time that foster carer has been approved.

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| Therefore, where foster carers have been approved for over an initial twelve month period, the frequency of supervision may be set at six weekly intervals if agreed by both the foster carer and the SSW and all the children in placement have been placed for over a twelve month period.  **The length of time a child has been in placement will always be the primary determination for the frequency of supervision being provided to the foster carer with the following determinations also needing to be applied:**  N.B: Where children have achieved permanence through long term matching before they have been living in their fostering placement for a twelve-month period, such as with Connected Person’s fostering placements, supervisions are able to reduce to 6 weekly intervals if both the foster carer and the allocated SSW consider this appropriate and there are no contraindications presenting to doing so.  **This schedule does not negate the requirement to apply a level of flexibility to these parameters based upon the circumstances and needs of the placement at any given time .**  Each supervision meeting should be undertaken against a planned agenda shared before the meeting takes place with both the foster carer and the SSW being able to bring forward matters they wish to discuss within the meeting. Each foster carer supervision should be considered against the ‘Signs of Safety’ model of supervision, namely:   * What is working well? * What are we worried about? * What needs to happen next? |

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| Each supervision meeting should consider three distinct elements which may include the following, but which is not an exhaustive or wholly defined list:  Pastoral:  For example:   * Foster Carers’ own physical and emotional wellbeing. * Concerns which may be arising in respect of members of the foster carers’ household or wider family support networks. * Forthcoming planned holidays.   Educative:  For example:   * Training Requirements. * Personal Development Plan (PDP). * Reflection and learning from training events that may have been completed recently. * Review of policy and procedures (existing or newly launched).   Management:   * Review and action of any matters arising from the last supervision. * Child/ren placed with the carer– their health, culture, identity, education, leisure, and family contact arrangements -identifying any support needs. * Celebration of achievements. * Scheduled meetings or appointments. * Risk Assessments and Safe Caring Planning. * Health and Safety * Financial issues. * Review of foster carer’s recording. * Actions to be taken forward from this supervision (to include escalation and referral actions) and who is going to be responsible for these.   AOB:   * Follow up discussions relating to any significant changes, e.g. a placement ending or any notifiable incidents that have occurred since the previous supervision * As brought forward by either the foster carer or the allocated SSW. |

**Arrangements for the recording of the Supervision Record and sharing with the foster carer:**

* Supervision Form to be completed by Supervising Social Worker and shared by email with the foster carer within five working days.
* Confirmation of acceptance of the Supervision Form to be sent back by the foster carer within five working days of receiving it.
* All Supervision Forms should be uploaded to the foster carer’s Charms record within 10 working days of the supervision meeting
* The date of the next supervision meeting should be set at the time of each supervision taking place to ensure the timeliness of the supervisions being held with the foster carer.

As part of the supervision process, Supervising Social Workers will undertake a minimum of one unannounced home visit (UAHV) to the foster carers each year in accordance with National Minimum Standards (2011) with the Fostering Service aiming to undertake two UAHVs in a twelve-month period as best practice.

A record of unannounced visits will be kept, utilising a standard format. This record will be shared with the foster carer and held on the foster carer’s Charms record.

**Arrangements for supervision of Respite, Family Link and *On Hold* Carers**

**Respite Carers**

Respite only carers should receive supervision at a minimum of 6 weekly intervals, any changes to this will need to be discussed between the carer, their SSW and their line manager.

**Family Link Carers**

Family Link Carers should receive supervision at a minimum of 12 weekly intervals, any changes to this will need to be discussed between the carer, their SSW and their line manager.

**On Hold Carers**

When carers are on hold at their request due to personnel circumstances, a keeping in touch /supervision arrangement will be agreed with them on an individual basis with the expectation that there will be a minimum of 3 monthly contact between the carers and the SSW. The reasons for this will be discussed and agreed by their SSW and their manager and recorded within the carers Charms record. The supervision agreement will need to be updated to reflect this.

When Carers are on hold following an allegation made against them, whilst this is investigated the expectation will be for supervision to take place a minimum of 4 weekly, the supervision agreement will need to be updated to reflect this. This will support effective communication between the agency and the carers in relation to the progress of the investigation and to discuss and review any ongoing training needs or changes of circumstance for the carers. Whilst it is acknowledged that during situations where allegations have been made against carers that their relationship with the agency may be tense it is important that alongside supports offered by other agencies e.g. Fostering Network that the agency is also available for support. If carers decline to meet with their SSW whilst on hold due to an allegation this will need to be recorded on their Charms record and discussed by the SSW with their line manager.