

Freedom of Information – Response – 26584

I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information regarding foster carers approved for emergency duty / out-of-hours placements (sometimes referred to as “EDT carers”):

1. Please provide the current policy, guidance, or handbook that sets out the rate of pay, annual leave or respite entitlement (in days or nights) for emergency duty foster carers.

The rates of pay, annual leave, and short break entitlement for emergency foster carers within the Emergency Foster Care Hub are set out in the Emergency Foster Carer Agreement. The accompanying document contains the relevant terms and conditions.

2. If the leave/respite entitlement differs from that of standard foster carers, please explain how.

Due to the nature of the Emergency Foster Care Hub, emergency foster carers can take their short break entitlement after a child or young person has moved on, although this is not always the case. This allows carers to have a break before another child moves in. This arrangement differs from standard foster carers, who may have more structured periods.

3. Please provide any information on the rota model / on-call arrangements for emergency duty foster carers (e.g., number of nights per week/month, standby expectations).

When emergency foster carers are receiving the retainer fee, they are expected to be available on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as outlined in the Emergency Foster Carer Agreement. There is no rota or duty system; placing children with emergency foster carers is based solely on availability and matching.

4. If available, please provide details of any paid/unpaid leave rules that apply specifically to emergency duty foster carers.

As stated in the Emergency Foster Carer Agreement, (please see attached document) the service may allow up to two days' break without stopping the retainer. If carers wish to take more than two days, this will need to be discussed with the service, and if agreed, the retainer fee will be paused.

The Emergency Foster Care Hub pilot agreement between Suffolk County Council and the Emergency Hub Foster Carer/s

Name of Emergency carer(s):

1st carer:

2nd carer (if relevant):

Address of household:

Date of approval:

Terms of approval:

Start date as Emergency foster carers:

Introduction:

This additional foster carer agreement outlines the specific tasks and expectations of the Emergency Foster Carer role.

The additional foster carer agreement for emergency hub foster carers is a supplement to the foster carers agreement already signed by the carer(s) at the time of their approval and subsequent annual reviews.

For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this agreement shall give rise to an employee and/or worker relationship between the foster carer and the service.

The emergency foster carer hub is a 12 month pilot scheme which will launch on the 3rd March 2025. The pilot shall be evaluated, with a view to implement the scheme permanently, if the emergency hub is a success.

The additional Emergency hub foster carer agreement will be reviewed annually as part of the foster carers annual review.

Trial period

The Emergency hub carers will start out their role for a 3-month trial period and a review will be held after 2 ½ months. This will allow carers to trial the role and consider whether this is a fostering role that is suitable for them and for the service to review suitability for the role. If a decision is made by the service that the role is not suitable, information and reasons for this to be provided to the foster carers in writing.

Supervision structure and support

The emergency foster carer(s) will be supervised by the emergency hub senior supervising social worker.

Emergency foster carers will have a minimum of 1 supervision visit per month.

Emergency hub carers are required to inform the emergency hub Supervising Social Worker (SSW) or Practice Manager of any changes or need to know information in between supervision visits. The SSW will also have regular contact with the emergency hub carer(s) during each placement to support with the care planning for the child, ensuring the foster carers are equip with what they need to support the child.

The Emergency hub carers and children placed with them will have additional support from the Fostering Family Support Practitioner and the level of support will be set out at the initial placement planning meeting.

The Emergency hub carers can access support from the FOOHAS team out of hours and at weekends. (EDS contact number 0345 6061488)

Placing children with emergency foster carers

Please refer to the Emergency hub carer procedures and pathway.

During working hours, decisions of placing children with the emergency hub carers is made jointly by Fostering senior SSW, the allocated social worker for the child and the placements team. If the placement is required out of hours, the decision will be made by the EDS worker, in conjunction with the FOOHAS worker and the operational manager (if required)

Referrals to be discussed with the emergency hub carers prior to a child being placed (when possible) and the placement referral form to be provided to the Emergency foster carers (if available). A risk assessment to be undertaken by the Senior SSW and the child's social worker and discussed with the foster carer before placement.

The emergency foster carers will record a personalised "Welcome to us" video that the child's social worker will show the children before they arrive alongside the Foster carer child friendly profile. These profiles/videos will be accessible out of hours on the EDS sharepoint system.

Children and young people are placed for a maximum of 10 working days, an extension can be only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and in agreement with the foster carers and the Fostering Practice/ Service manager.

Once a child is placed, a planning meeting is held within 2 working days to plan for intervention and support and to plan transition for the child's move on. A further planning meeting will take place after 6 working days.

There may be times when carer(s) need to utilise the support of their family members when caring for a child. Under delegated authority, carers are able to identify an appropriate, safe adult to support them with day-care, which will be paid at the usual day-care rate of £5. This should be discussed and assessed on a case-by-case basis with the senior social worker, and agreement will need to be sought from management.

Recording:

Emergency foster carers are expected to provide daily recordings on the foster carer portal inline with the Recording Policy.

Finance information

Foster carers will be paid £50 retainer per day (£350 per week) The foster carers will then be paid the allowance for the child/ren and tier 4 fee element for any child/ren that they except for the duration of the placement, regardless of age.

Payments to Emergency foster carers will be reviewed annually.

Holidays and wellbeing:

In line with the current short break policy, as Suffolk County Council approved foster carers, the hub emergency foster carers will be entitled to have 21 nights paid (equivalent to the paid short break offer)

If required, emergency foster carers can in agreement with the service take up to 2 days break without the retainer payment being stopped in between placements. However, for longer breaks, the service reserves the right to temporarily suspend the retainer payment until the carers offer further emergency placements. If payments are temporality stopped this shall be discussed with the foster carer and put into writing.

Continuing Professional Development

The emergency foster carers can access the full foster carer training programme, via STF and CPD and will be expected to attend all hub meetings and training arranged via the Emergency foster carer hub.

Initially it has been agreed that the carers will meet virtually once a week to build a strong working relationships and a strong team culture for the hub. The emergency carers are expected to attend monthly support meetings with their fellow emergency hub carers, which will be co-coordinated by the social worker.

Review mechanism

The ongoing review of the emergency foster carer role will take place monthly in supervision and with a more detailed review in the foster carer annual review.

In addition to this, a specific 6 monthly review meeting will take place to include foster carers, held by the social worker and the practice manager to review progress, achievements, development areas and support needed.

What happens if the emergency carer is unable to fulfil the role as defined in this agreement?

If the emergency carers for any reason are unable to fulfil the role as emergency carers, an urgent meeting will be arranged to include the Carers, Social Worker and Practice Manager to discuss the concerns and to agree on a contingency plan.

Health and Safety

The emergency foster carer will need to ensure that their safer care plan home is kept up to date and reflects the child/ren's needs in placement. This can be adjusted accordingly at the placement planning meeting.

Confidentiality

The Emergency foster carers are expected to conform to confidentiality agreements as set out in the Foster care agreement.

Supporting implementation and evaluation activity

We would expect the emergency carers to support the development of the Emergency foster carer scheme. This would include supporting new emergency foster carers with buddying and support, recruitment activity and supporting evaluation of the project.

Declaration

For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this agreement shall give rise to an employee and/or worker relationship between the foster carer and the service.

This is a time limited 12 month pilot which has been funded by the Suffolk County Council.

This is a declaration those signing this agreement (the hub carers and person authorised to do so on behalf of the host service) understand and agree to the terms of the agreement.

Emergency foster carer
Date

Emergency foster carer
Date

Emergency hub Social Worker
Date

Practice Manager
Date

Next Review Date: