



One minute guide

Leeds Parent and Child Assessment Fostering Scheme

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What is the Leeds Parent and Child Assessment Fostering Scheme?

The Leeds Parent and Child Fostering Scheme has been in place for 25 years and offers specialist placements where parents live with their child in a foster carer's home. This supportive and nurturing environment helps assess and develop parenting skills while ensuring the child's safety. The scheme focuses on building practical skills and confidence in areas such as budgeting, organisation, nutrition, and safety awareness, providing guidance and assessment throughout.

The scheme is designed to support families who may be offered a placement by helping them build practical skills and confidence in areas such as budgeting, organisation, nutrition, and safety awareness. It offers guidance and assessment throughout as an alternative to separation, using a non-judgemental and hands-off approach. Whilst this guide refers to 'parent' and 'child', it should be noted that a placement can include both parents, and more than one child.

How do the placements work?

There are two types placement, either Assessment or Non-Assessment. Both involve foster carer oversight, but the level of oversight differs. Assessment placements check if a parent can safely care for their child, while non-assessment placements offer support without formal evaluation, either after an assessment or if extra help is needed. Children are usually under the age of five, though there is no strict age limit. Parents can be assessed at any age.

The parent and child live with a skilled foster carer for around 12 weeks as part of an assessment of their parenting ability and where there are concerns about the child's safety. Foster carers balance support with independence, providing guidance and observation while working closely with Children's Services and other professionals.

A written assessment for assessed placements is completed to inform decisions about the child's future. If extra support is needed, some placements may be extended - with approval from the scheme coordinators - depending on the circumstances.

The child entering placement becomes looked after and follows mainstream foster care oversight. If the parent is looked after, the foster carer supports both while assessing parenting. Placement requires approval at the social work service Decision and Review Panel (DARP) and may be through [Section 20](#) or an Interim Care Order (ICO). Non-assessment placements for lower-level plans should be discussed with the placements team.

What is it like to live in a parent and child placement?

Parents have a furnished bedroom but share space with the fostering household and foster carers cover household bills. Parents must provide certain baby equipment, with specific needs discussed at the planning meeting, and parents remain responsible for their own and their child's daily needs, including food, travel, and toiletries. Social Workers can help explain this to parents, and ensure that financial support is in place for them.

Throughout the placement, the parent is always the primary carer responsible for their child and should not rely on foster carers for childcare. Parents are encouraged to live as independently as possible within the placement. Foster carers offer structured support to help parents develop skills in bonding, baby care and parenting while ensuring safety and are knowledgeable about infant development and safe care practices.

Expectations of parents and foster carers during the placement

Placements under the scheme are agreed with particular expectations of both the parents and foster carers.

Parents are expected to:

- work closely, openly and honestly with the foster carer. They may initially complete tasks together, to help with settling in and understanding expectations;
- attend regular meetings and reviews to monitor progress;
- work in collaboration with their social worker and other practitioners;
- remain free from intoxicating substances for the duration of the placement;

Parents are encouraged to take part in a child-focused activity at least once a week. Specific parenting expectations will depend on the long-term plan for the child, with different expectations for family support or independent living. These expectations are discussed during the planning and decision-making process (please see below).

Foster carers are expected to:

- work closely, openly and honestly with the parents;
- record daily observations of parenting, attend meetings, and report any concerns, contributing to formal assessments.
- complete a written assessment for assessed placements to help inform decisions about the child's future for Children's Services and, if relevant, the Court.

Many parents successfully move on to care for their children independently after placement. Assessments should have a realistic chance of success, as separation after assessment can be disruptive for the child.

Planning and decision-making

Placement decisions are made by the Children's Social Work Service or the Family Court, and the process begins with a Pre-Placement Planning meeting that outlines responsibilities, expectations, and support. Family contact should be carefully considered based on the circumstances, in order to maintain confidentiality during the placement.

Once the placement has begun, progress is tracked through monthly Placement Review Meetings, attended by key professionals, where additional help can be offered and discussions inform the future plans for the parent and child.

Assessments are undertaken in three stages:

- Initial four weeks: close supervision while assessing needs and strengths, allowing for a gradual increase in the parent's independence. Audio monitoring may be used initially for the child's safety.
- Next four weeks: increased independence, including activities like food shopping and attending community groups.
- Final four weeks: further increase in independence with reduced supervision, encouraging safe decision making and the transition into independent living.

Key contacts and further information

The Leeds Parent and Child Assessment Fostering Scheme is coordinated by:

Kelsii Walker: kelsii.walker@leeds.gov.uk - 0113 378 5209 and

Samantha Binks: samantha.binks@leeds.gov.uk - 0113 378 8775

Please note that Parent and Child placements cannot be requested through the Placements team; all requests need to come to Kelsii and Sam.

