

3 December 2021

Respite provision for foster carers and looked after children

1. Please can you provide a copy of the Trust's respite policy and procedures

Belfast Trust does not have a Respite Policy and Procedure. Short Breaks decisions are made subject to the needs of the young people in placement and are made by the Care planning team around the young person.

2. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you tell me the process used by the foster carer for requesting respite.

Should carers require a short break - this is requested via their supervising social worker and discussed with the young person's social worker and senior social worker. If this is deemed to be in the best interests of the placement, carers and the looked after child/young person, this is then progressed. Referrals for short breaks are subsequently made via the fostering duty system. A referral is completed by the field SW via PARIS.

3. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you provide a copy of the assessment tool used by social work staff to determine if respite is to be approved.

There is no specific assessment tool to determine as to whether respite is to be approved. This is based on the care planning needs of the young person and considered by the professional team and progressed. The need for and appropriateness of short breaks can also be discussed at the child's LAC review and foster carer annual review, fostering panels, placement under pressure meetings, risk strategy meetings and placement support meetings

4. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you outline all professionals who are involved in decision making concerning approval and provision of a single instance of respite.

This is considered and progressed by the Care planning team; the field social worker, in consultation with the Senior social worker and in conjunction with the supervising and senior social worker in the fostering team.

5. Please can you tell me the number of Trust foster carers who have requested respite care in the last year.

There is no data base holding the number of carers who have requested a Short Break(s) and to provide this information would necessitate a manual trawl of records. We estimate that compliance with this request for information would exceed the appropriate costs limit. Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information 2000, the limit has been specified as £450 and represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours

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in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.

a. Please break this down by emergency/ planned/ any other designation used by the trust

As above

b. Please also provide the number foster carers who received respite when requested

As above

c. Please also provide the number of foster carers who were refused respite when this was requested.

As above

6. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you tell me the annual total number of days respite entitlement that an approved foster carer has within the trust (please also outline any difference between non fee paid/ fee paid foster carers).

Unlike Independent Fostering agencies, Belfast Trust foster carers do not have specified levels of short breaks that they are 'entitled to'. This is the case for both fee and non paid Trust foster carers. This is due to the Trust wanting to support the child in placement to be as fully integrated into foster families and included on family holidays.

If there is an agreed need for short breaks the level of this will be considered and the frequency agreed. This is always kept under review based on the needs of the child and the need for the short breaks.

7. Please can you tell me the number of foster carers who have received/ not received their annual respite entitlement within in the trust in the last year.

N/A given there is no specific annual entitlement.

8. If not stated in the respite policy what alternative arrangements are possible for respite other than placement with an approved trust foster carer.

Some children have short breaks with birth family members. Some may also have short breaks with friends/family of the foster carer with whom they are placed and who have had necessary checks completed re themselves, household members and their home. This is preferred in many instances as it is often a more natural experience for children. Some who have a disability may have short breaks in a specialist short break facility. Extern Time Out can also be used in some circumstances depending on the needs of the child and appropriateness of this.

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9. Please can you provide a copy of the equality screening for your respite policy.

This cannot be provided as there is no respite policy.

10. Please outline the total number of days holiday entitlement (annual leave) which foster carers receive.

0

11. Please confirm if the annual respite entitlement is additional to any annual leave entitlement.

Not available

12. Please outline the trusts arrangements for providing sickness leave, compassionate leave to foster carers.

If carers are unwell to the extent that they are unable to look after a child, it is preferable that carers have support people who can help them in these instances. Belfast Trust endeavours to identify such support people in advance of unplanned events such as bereavement and sickness. In terms of family bereavement it is preferable, where possible, that children (especially those placed on a long-term basis) remain in the home where possible and if appropriate given that they may also be experiencing grief and to receive the support of those closest to them and to be included in the family. If this is not possible or appropriate it is then preferred that children be cared for temporarily via short breaks with an identified support person for the carer or failing that with an alternative foster carer that they are familiar with.

13. Please outline any arrangement where holiday entitlement is paid for in lieu or other comparable arrangement.

As there is no specific holiday entitlement carers are not paid in lieu. However if a Belfast Trust carer receives short breaks they continue to be paid their fostering allowances and fee (where applicable) in addition to the Trust paying an alternative foster carer who is providing the short break.

14. Please provide a copy of the policy which governs foster carer leave entitlement.

There is no policy in respect of this issue, as noted above

15. Please can you provide a copy of the equality screening for your foster carer leave policy.

There is no policy in respect of this issue, as noted above