

Department for Children, Adults and Health

Fostering Service

Foster Carers Recording Policy

August 2020

Policy on Responsibilities and

Suggestions for Good Practice

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# Introduction

**The fostering service** has a duty to maintain records on its staff, foster carers and children who are placed with those carers**. Foster carers** are required to keep records about the children they look after, and this policy lays out guidelines so that everyone knows what is expected. There are clear expectations about what records must be kept, and how confidential information should be stored. The fostering service also have a responsibility to ensure that foster carers are aware of their role in recording information for the children that they look after.

South Gloucestershire Council also have a generic Recording Policy and Guidelines on Tri.X which is available to all staff working for the fostering service. This policy is specifically about foster carer’s recording.

Foster carer recordings are important because:

* they provide the child with a coherent record of their life in care,
* they support good communication between the child and their carer as well as the child’s social worker and the supervising social worker
* they may be used in evidence for Court
* they can help to safeguard carers and the child if a complaint, standard of care concern or allegation is made,
* they give valuable insights into the child’s life experience for all professionals involved which in turn has the potential to enable them to support the placement – and ultimately the child, much better.

This policy gives foster carers guidance to provide the best possible records, and enable them to be written in a way that means they can be shared with the child. This policy is designed also to ensure the approach to record keeping is consistent across the service, and to make sure the records are used effectively by the child’s social worker and by the fostering service.

# Legal Framework for Recording

This policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation.

The legal requirement for this policy is set out in **The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Volume 4: Fostering Services, Section 5.75**:

* *There should be explicit policies in place to enable foster carers and staff to keep clear records about children in placement and the work of foster carers with those children. Information recorded should be non-stigmatising and distinguish between fact and opinion. Children must be made aware of policies regarding their access to all records kept about them, whether by the foster carer or the fostering service itself.*

**Standard 26 of the** **Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011** concerns record keeping.

* *Records are clear, up to date, stored securely and contribute to an understanding of the child’s life*

**Standard 4.5 of The Training and Development Standards for Foster carers** (TSD) describes the principle of keeping good records and says foster carers should:

* *Understand the importance of keeping accurate records*
* *Know how to record understandable, relevant, clear and concise, factual information which can be checked*
* *Know how to enable young people to participate in record keeping*
* *Record keeping is also part of the Foster Care Agreement which foster carers sign annually*

**The Data Protection Act 2018** is the UK’s implementation of the **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR) which came into force on 25 May 2018. The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) provides a legal framework for all data protection in the UK and has introduced new requirements for how organisations process personal data, as well as expanding the rights of individuals to control how their personal information is collected and processed.

Fostering services across the UK must comply with this legislation, in order to be accountable for data protection and consider issues of data compliance.

# Definitions

Foster carers will record things in different ways and for the purposes of this policy the following definitions may be helpful:

* **Diary** – a personal diary of reminders, noting appointments, meetings, school holidays, visitors, celebration days etc. This is not the same as recording.
* **Recording - Daily** ~~-~~ This is a summary of the child’s day, a continuous running record of the child’s life. (Please see appendix 1.)
* **Recording** – **Weekly -** Following the format of the template, (please see appendix 1 , this is the requirement for foster carers to complete about all children living with them.

# Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure foster carer records are clear, accurate and up to date for each child they are caring for. It is an essential feature of this policy that foster carer records are seen by the child’s social worker and discussed with foster carers as part of their supervision by the supervising social worker~~.~~

In South Gloucestershire, foster carer records are written ***to*** the child, and where possible shared with them at the time of writing if they are old enough to understand them. This policy sets out how this should be done.

Parent and Child Placements are recorded in a different way to reflect the purpose of these placements.

Training specifically covering all aspects of recording is mandatory core skill and can be booked via the training website. This should be discussed with the supervising social worker.

# Purpose of record keeping

It is the carer’s responsibility to assist in meeting the needs of individual children and young people by keeping a continuing record of key events and issues that occur. Records have many purposes. **Primarily, they maintain a continuous life story for the child or young person, which will be of use to them now and in the future.**

Recording is also required for the following purposes:

* Gives an accurate picture of what is happening in the child’s life
* Monitors health, educational progress and social development of the child
* Helps to identify behavioural patterns
* Contributes information to case conferences, planning or review meetings
* Provides evidence of the work being done with a child or young person
* Provides information to the courts for use in care proceedings, if requested
* Records children and young people’s responses to their situation and helps identify any patterns or changes in their presentation, for example before and after family time
* Enables continuity of care by passing information to subsequent carers
* Provides information to social workers to assist them in their duties and responsibilities in relation to the child
* It can be used for Life Story Work
* Can help to keep the child/young person safe
* Can help to protect foster carer and their family from the risk of a complaint, concern about standard of care or allegation
* Shows that the child/young person’s history is valued

## Notifiable Incidents

The supervising social worker and the child’s social worker must be informed immediately when there is a significant event, eg accident or illness, or when there is a notifiable incident. (Please see appendix 2) If the incident happens out of office hours, the foster carer should contact the fostering out of hours helpline if within operating hours or EDT. All significant and notifiable events should be written down as soon as they happen, including the date, time, who was present and what exactly happened and what was said. Notes should be brief and to the point. This should be passed immediately to the supervising social worker and the child’s social worker, with a request for an acknowledgement from them that they have received this information. It is important to know they have received the notification as social workers are required to notify OFSTED of these incidents.

# Good Practice

Recording will be completed either daily or weekly. The frequency and detail of the recording will vary depending on the care plan, what is going on for individual children, and the length of the child’s stay with foster carers. Daily recordings are required when a child first moves to a new foster home, or when a child is unsettled in the foster home. The move from daily to weekly recordings will be agreed with your supervising social worker and the child’s social worker.

**In South Gloucestershire, we encourage our foster carers to write their records as if writing directly to the child, and to share records with them as they are written**. See Appendix 3 for an example of the required style of recording.

If the child is very young, records should be written with the idea in mind of giving them a sense of their life story when they read them in the future. Children and young people should be encouraged to contribute. If the foster carer thinks that there is something that the young person should not see in the recording, or that they feel unable to talk to them about, the foster carer should contact their supervising social worker to talk about this and whether and how the information should be kept private.

When recording details, care should be taken regarding language that could be seen as offensive, angry or abusive. It is also important not to use recording as a means of “letting off steam” about a situation or person. It may be necessary to record disagreements, but it is not acceptable to use records as a means to verbally blame, punish or retaliate against others.

Equality and diversity issues should be reflected in all recording. This can include references to pieces of work where specific consideration has been given to a child’s needs because of their gender, ethnicity, linguistic ability, sexual orientation, disability, mental health status, caring responsibilities etc. Foster carers can be explicit about these issues and how they have been taken into consideration in their practice.

It is good practice to include a photo of the child from time to time in the recording – particularly significant events or moments of joy or achievement for the child. These can be attached to the template or scanned in separately, and will form an important part of the child’s life story.

# How to Record

* Records should be clear, concise and accurate. They should be easily understandable to the child
* Records should be written to, for and with the child where possible
* Children and young people should be encouraged to contribute
* Where possible stick to the facts, but if you give an opinion, explain why you have come to that particular opinion
* Avoid slang and/or jargon
* Records should be written in a way that conveys respect
* Each entry must be dated along with the date of the incident
* Alterations made to records previously submitted should be dated and signed with the reason for the alteration
* Significant or notifiable events must be recorded as soon as possible after the event, noting any witnesses

# What to Record

**Health and Medicals:**

* Foster carers must include in their weekly recording a written record of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children during their placement.
* Visits to doctor, dentist, optician, and/or clinic and details of any advice/medication prescribed
* Therapy appointments
* Milestones – e.g. cuts first tooth
* Minor accidents and action taken
* Serious incidents should be recorded on the Serious Incidents Notification Form (as stated above)

**Education:**

* Letters and messages to and from school
* Any absences and the reason including exclusions
* School meetings including PEPs
* Open Days, concerts, sports events
* Educational achievements
* Extra tuition, clubs and extra-curricular activities
* Significant friendships and any difficulties in friendships, such as bullying

**Contact with family, friends, professionals and others:**

* Dates and details of family time – who with, where they happened, how they went
* Child’s reaction to the family time – before and after as well as their reaction if family time did not go ahead
* Date and details of visits and/or overnight stays away from the foster home

(including sleepovers with friends)

* Visits to or from friends
* Times when alternative carers have been looking after the child e.g. babysitters,
* Visits and contact with social worker, supervising social worker and other professionals

If the foster carer is supervising the family time it is advisable to also check with the children’s social worker if there are specific areas that should be considered and recorded.

**Behaviour: (Please also refer to the Behaviour Policy)**

* Any behaviour that is unusual or causes concern which might be evidenced by a change in their presentation
* Any behaviour which might be celebrated with the child
* Any evidence of behaviour which could be attributed to trauma or distress
* Significant disagreements in the home and how they were resolved
* Any behavioural interventions that have had a positive outcome
* Any sanctions or consequences imposed
* What does the carer think that this behaviour says about how a child is feeling?
* Any physical restraint must be agreed at a multi-disciplinary meeting and the foster carer trained appropriately. This must be recorded on a Notifiable Incident Form. (Appendix 2)
* Details of any involvement with the police – reasons and outcomes
* Date and times if child/young person goes missing and actions taken

**Allowances:**

* Date when pocket money and, if relevant, any other allowance is given to a child or young person, for example, clothing or food allowance

Foster carers should also record their requests for help or assistance, or when reporting information to others e.g. duty team, police, child’s social worker, supervising social worker, medic etc

# Parent and Child Placements

One of the key differences between parent and child fostering and other types of fostering concerns assessments. Foster carers have to record their observations of the parent daily. Parents are made fully aware of the foster carer being part of the assessment process and what the purpose of this is. The foster carer’s observations will feed into the social worker’s overall assessment and are used in court. The foster carer can also be called to give evidence.

A template is attached to this policy (Appendix 3), which carers should use to record parent and child placements. Foster carers should share their recordings with the parents, ensuring nothing unexpected arises in court. The parents should then sign them and they can also record their views.

# What Do You Do with the Record?

## Foster Carers

 It is an essential feature of this policy that foster carer’s recordings are seen by the supervising social worker and the child’s social worker**. Where possible recording should be typed. All recordings should be emailed to your supervising social worker and copied to the child’s social worker. This must be done on a weekly basis.**

As records contain personal information they must be sent securely. **If foster carers do not have a secure email the supervising social worker will discuss with them how to set one up.** Once set up, there is no necessity to anonymise records. Foster carers should ensure all electronic records are password protected on any device used and that all paper copies of confidential information are stored securely.

When a placement ends any paperwork must be returned to the supervising social worker. Under the Data Protection Act. Foster carers may not retain records of the placement, except for the names of the children/young people placed and the dates of the placement

If a foster carer needs to look at their recordings at a later date – perhaps because of a complaint or allegation, they are entitled to have access to the recordings they have made.

## Supervising Social Workers & Children’s Social Workers

Supervising social workers will read the recordings and upload them to the carer’s file. They will write a case note if there is anything of significance in the recordings. The child’s social worker has responsibility to also read the recording and to upload onto the child’s file and add a case note, if relevant, on the child’s file.

# Appendix 1

#

Department for Children, Adults and Health

**Foster Carers’ Recording Template**

**This record is the story of *(name of child or young person)*’s life with us *(name of foster carers).* We have written it to you for when you are ready to read it.**

Period of time recording covers:

Date of recording:

Name of the person who wrote the recording:

|  |
| --- |
| **Child or young person’s view***Was the child or young person involved in writing this recording? Have they seen it?* |
|  |
| **Family life***Please write here some of the things you have done during the week, it might include the new skills a child has learned or a task they are remembering to do, such as lay the table or feed a pet, a favourite TV show or movie you watch together, any significant disagreements in the home and how they were resolved, something which made you all laugh.* |
|  |
| **Health** *Please record any trips to the doctor, dentist, optician or therapist. Record any minor first aid or medication given in the last week including name of medication , date and dosage given and reason why required. Please also record any health and developmental milestones, like first tooth or larger shoe size. Any serious health incidents should be recorded on the notifiable incident form and sent to the social worker immediately. If you are caring for a child who has specific medical requirements and you regularly administer medicine, please complete the medicine administration record, currently being compiled.* |
|  |
| **Education***Please record any letters and messages to and from school, any absences and the reason including exclusions; school meetings, PEPs, Open Days, assemblies, concerts, sports events, educational achievements to celebrate, extra tuition and extra-curricular activities.* |
|  |
| **Social development***Please record any significant friendships or any difficulties with friends such as bullying; dates and details of any visits to, or from, friends including overnight stays, and any hobbies, clubs or activities the child particularly enjoys.*  |
|  |
| **Family Time** *Please write about the dates and details of family time – who was it with, where it happened, how it went, the child’s reaction both before and after, as well as their reaction if family time did not go ahead.* |
|  |
| **Contact with professionals and others***Please record* any t*imes when alternative carers have been looking after the child e.g. babysitters,**visits and contact with social worker, supervising social worker and other professionals. Please also record any requests for help or support to care for this child or when reporting information to others about them.* |
|  |
| **Behaviour***Any behaviour that is unusual or causes concern as well as any behaviour which might be celebrated with the child, any evidence of behaviour which could be attributed to trauma or distress, any behavioural interventions that have had a positive outcome and any sanctions or consequences imposed. Any serious incidents, perhaps if the young person went missing or the police were called, should be recorded on the notifiable incident form and sent to the social worker immediately.**What does the carer think that this behaviour says about how a child is feeling?*  |
|  |
| **Finances***Please comment on how the child has spent pocket money this week or any large amounts of money spent on the child, please remember to keep the receipts for large purchases.* |
|  |
| **Summary***Please remember to write about what is going well and what you or the child are worried about. What do you think should happen next?* |
|  |

# Appendix 2

**Foster Carers Serious Incidents Notification Form,**

**Schedules 6 and 7 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2011**

Please complete this form should one of the following notifiable incidents listed below occur:

Name of Child**:…………………………………………** Date of Birth of Child**:**………………………….

Status of the child who lives with you (Section 20 or Full Care Order)………………………………………

Name of Foster Carer:…………………………………………………..

Telephone number of Foster Carer:……………………………..

Name of Fostering Social Worker**:……………………………………….**

Name of Child’s Social Worker**:………………………………………….**

**IN EACH CASE PLEASE INFORM *AT LEAST* ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL WORKERS AND RECORD NAME AND ROLE OF THE PERSON YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Incident(Notifiable Incidents as set out in Fostering **Services** Regulations 2011 Schedule**s** **6** & **7**) | Date of incident and time | Date and time Fostering Social Worker notified | Date and time child’s Social Worker notified  | Date and time Emergency Duty Service notified |
| Death of a child placed with you. |  |  |  |  |
| Serious illness or serious accident of a child placed with you. |  |  |  |  |
| Outbreak of an infectious disease in the foster home which the GP decides should be ‘notified’.\*\* |  |  |  |  |
| Alleged serious offence committed by a child placed with you, involving police.  |  |  |  |  |
| Involvement in or suspected exploitation of a child placed with you  |  |  |  |  |
| Serious incident relating to a child placed with you resulting in Police being called to your home. |  |  |  |  |
| Restraint of a child or young person. |  |  |  |  |
| Child/young person missing from placement. |  |  |  |  |

**Brief Notifiable Incident description:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Please provide a brief overview of the notifiable incident, including any immediate action you have taken and if appropriate, complete the attached body map (page 3)** ***(\*\* Covid 19 – Please notify your supervising social worker or child’s social worker if anyone in your household contracts the Coronavirus)*** |

Signed.......................................... Date.......................

Name (Capitals) …………………………………………………………

*Note – if you have had a critical incident, which is not notifiable as set out in the list above or if you have any doubts or are uncertain you should always seek advice from your Supervising Social Worker.*

*Examples are;*

*Violent Incidents eg Assault by a foster child on you or a member of your household.*

*Serious accident or injury to you whilst carrying out your duties.*

*Any event which may result in media interest eg high profile court hearings connected to a child (or child’s family) placed with you*

***All foster carers have a responsibility to report to their Supervising Social Worker or duty worker any critical incidents and there should be no delay in reporting the incident or event.***

**Body Map**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date of injury :** |  |
| **Name of Foster Child:** |  |
| **Name of Foster Carer:** |  |
| **Injury seen by:** |  |
| **Date reported to the Department and to whom:** |  |
| **Date this form completed:** |  |

Please indicate the site of the injuries/marks by **‘mouse clicking’** within one of the square/s within the body map below, then type into the square/s one of the following characters on the ‘Key’ which best describes the injury:

|  |
| --- |
| **KEY** |
| **G =** Graze | **b =** Burn |
| **X =** Scratch | **C =** Cut |
| **B =** Bruise | **S =** Swelling |



|  |
| --- |
| **Please describe the injury (e.g size, shape, nature of the injury, severity etc) and what treatment was provided and any follow up :**Signed ……………………………………… |

# Appendix 3



Department of Children, Adults and Health

**Foster Carers’ Parent and Child Recording Template**

**This record is the story of *(names of parent and child)*’s life with us *(name of foster carers).***

Period of time recording covers:

Date of recording:

Name of the person who wrote the recording:

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **PARENT’S RESPONSES TO THE CHILD’S NEEDS:**
 |
| **Feeding** |
| **Bathing** |
| **Clothing**  |
| **Routines** |
| **Health e.g. responding to changes, signs and symptoms** |
| **Safety e.g. checking child regularly, ensuring proper equipment is used** |
| **Emotional needs e.g. warmth, affection, responding to crying** |
| **Stimulation e.g. playing, talking, singing** |
| **Degree of prompting required to meet child’s needs** |
| **Ability to cope with stress e.g. if child won’t settle or accept feeding** |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **PARENT’S ACHIEVEMENTS AND DIFFICULTIES IN WORKING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE:**
 |
| **Budgeting and shopping** |
| **Domestic tasks**  |
| **Relationships with partner, or ex-partner, friends and family** |
| **Self-care e.g. eating, sleeping, personal health & hygiene** |
| **Leisure activities** |
| **Education / work** |

|  |
| --- |
| **GENERAL PROGRESS WITHIN THE FOSTER HOME** |
| **Relationships with carer and carer’s family** |
| **Willingness to work with plan** |

|  |
| --- |
| **CONTACT WITH PROFESSIONALS** |
| **Any contact with professionals, social workers or health visitors etc** |
| **Any requests for help from professionals** |
| **Any help offered or provided by family members or friends** |

|  |
| --- |
| **PARENT’S COMMENTS** |
| It is really important that this information is shared with parents and they have an opportunity to comment. If a parent does not wish to comment, then please write “no comment” in the box. |

**Parent’s signature………………………………….………date…………………**