

Kent County Council

Foster Carer Diary Record Policy

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1. Introduction and Legal Framework

The Fostering Service has a duty to maintain records on its staff, foster carers and the children placed with those foster carers under The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and The Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS).

NMS 26.2 states 'staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed.'

The Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for Foster Care Standard 2: 'Understand your role as a foster carer' and Standard 4: 'Know how to communicate effectively', also highlight the need and importance of foster carers record keeping.

Any records relating to children in care continue to be regulated as personal data under the new Data Protection Act 2018. The Act covers access to any records kept either on paper or electronically and increases the rights of the public to have access to any records that may be held on them, including children and young people. For this reason, it is important that foster carers make records in a factual manner and that the records are kept secure.

This policy clarifies Kent Fostering Services expectations of foster carers to record information about and for the children they look after; including the confidentiality, sharing and storing of that information.

The policy should be read in conjunction with foster carers attending the revised 'Record Keeping for Foster Carers' training.

2. Why foster carers should record information

Foster carers are a pivotal part of the professional team around the children and young people they care for. They often know more about a child's likes and dislikes, feelings, worries and achievements than the other professionals involved with the children / young people. It is therefore important that carers record and report their observations accurately and that, as far as possible, both the positive and negative aspects of a child / young person's daily life are reflected.

- Records are essential for the child / young person to better understand the reasons they came to live in foster care and can help to make sense of their lived experience, contributing to a more rounded sense of self and their identity.
- Records contribute to the decision making and care planning for a child/young person (this includes the potential for records to be filed as part of care proceedings and used as reference in child in care reviews for example, to better understand a child / young person's behaviour, concerns and progress).
- Records can contribute to the observation and assessment of contact between children/young people and their birth families.
- Records can support an application for additional interventions and support for the child / young person /fostering family (e.g. education, therapy etc).

- Records are helpful should a complaint, standard of care concern or allegation be made against foster carers; providing a clear method for which events can be recalled accurately and situations more clearly understood.
- Records can be helpful for foster carers and social workers to monitor a child's progress, review and develop practice, including identifying different strategies to respond and manage children and young people's behaviour.
- Daily records about a child moving from foster care to an adoptive family may be essential to help the adoptive parents understand the child's routine.

3. What information foster carers should record

Once a child/young person's daily routine is established, foster carers can summarise this at the start of the child's diary records, to avoid unnecessary repetition. The following should be included for the Child / young person

- Achievements and successes (e.g. award from school, certificate from a club).
- Success or progress with daily routines (e.g. joining the family for dinner, managing feelings and behaviours towards a sibling etc).
- Difficulties or challenges with daily routines (deterioration in self-care, refusal, etc).
- Changes in behaviour or mood (including the specific behaviours observed, what happened before and after).
- Allegations – Carers should capture information shared by a child/young person relating to their experiences and any allegations.
- Physical altercation or the restraint of a child. This should also be recorded in detail on the Kent Fostering Incident Form.
- Details of clothing purchased with costs and amount of pocket money given.
- Dates or times a child or young person is away from the foster home (e.g. missing, contact, sleepovers with friends, school trips, activities, clubs).
- Specific incidents, events or changes in the circumstances of the foster family and/or the child's family (e.g. Christmas, birthday celebrations, illness etc).
- Disagreements concerning any members of the fostering family and how this was managed.
- Dates of meetings, attendance, decisions (and actions).
- Accidents, injuries, medical appointments or treatment (e.g. dentist, optician, Dr).
- Details of when unwell, including any medication and treatment given.
- Hospital admissions for the child / young person.
- Visits (e.g. visitors to the home / trips out with others as a foster family and contact between child, carer and professionals).
- Contact between birth family (including the child's presentation, mood, behaviour before and after contact).
- Times when alternative carers have been looking after the child, for example babysitters, respite carers.
- Details of any damage, theft etc by the foster child / young person.
- Involvement with the police including reasons and outcomes.
- Missing and unauthorised absence, including contact with the Out of Hours Service and outcomes.
- Requests / referrals for support / advice and outcome.
- Any concerns regarding PREVENT and actions taken.

4. Recording for foster carers providing Short Breaks and Respite

- Recording should include a brief account of events from a child's arrival to their departure, including activities, achievements and any problems, illness, seizures, unusual incidents or significant events.
- Record observations about mood, behaviour, and significant area such as toilet training, communication, eating habits, sleeping pattern, bedwetting and like.
- Injuries, accidents, mishaps and any incident, observation or concern of event should be recorded with details (time/place) and how it was dealt with, including whether there was a need to use restraint with the child. All serious incidents should also be reported to the child's social worker as soon as possible.
- Medication records are kept by short breaks carers detailing administered medication during the child's stay. These records should be available for parents/foster carers to see.
- The needs of children receiving short-term breaks require there is an effective system for close communication between the carer and parents/full time carers.

5. How should foster carers record, store and share information?

As part of Kent County Council's (KCC) Environment Strategy, the Fostering Service are committed to reducing waste and developing new paperless ways of working. The Service therefore supports foster carers to maintain electronic records for the children /young people within their care. In addition to contributing to the reduction in the council's carbon footprint, working electronically is more secure, confidential, expedient and enables valuable information for children/young people to be maintained in a legible format as part of their life stories. Foster carers should:

- Record using the 'Foster Carers Diary Record' (an electronic version of this template will be e-mailed to all foster carers and can be found via the Foster Carers Handbook). NMS 26.5 states *'records, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatizing, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated.'*
- Record and maintain separate Diary Records for each child/young person in placement. NMS 26.6 states *'Information about the child is recorded clearly and, in a way, which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future.'*
- Create diary records using their own IT equipment, never saving the records to that IT equipment. Use a removable disk or memory stick if saving information, stored in a secure, locked storage container/cabinet. Firstly, records saved on a computer can be altered later and secondly, computers can be accessed by other family members/visitors to the home and hackers.
- Share diary records using KCC's [SECURE] email method **replying** to an email sent by the Fostering Service. NMS 26.4 states *'information about individual children is kept confidential and only shared with those who have a legitimate and current need to know the information.'*
- Information about a child or young person should be written in a manner they can see. The child should be aware of the existence of records and if appropriate the contents. If information is deemed unsuitable the foster carer should discuss with

the Fostering Social Worker / Child's Social Worker about how this information can be recorded.

- IT files that are created as a part of normal family life (photos, videos etc.) should only ever be stored on IT equipment (including smart phones, tablets etc) belonging to the foster carer, kept in the foster home and where the carer is able to share it with the child/young person. Encryption of these files is not necessary.
- Foster carers may wish to keep personal diaries regarding appointments, meetings and notes for supervision. These should not be maintained on an electronic device the diaries must be kept in the foster home, in a secure, locked storage container/cabinet. They remain the property of the foster carer.

6. Process

- For all emergency bed, respite / hub family, parent and child, short break and task centred foster placements daily diary records must be maintained by the foster carer whilst the foster child is in placement (The Fostering Network estimate that daily recording should take on average between 5-10 minutes per day for each child in placement; although this will vary).
- In some circumstances, usually in more settled ongoing permanent placements, the foster carer may reach agreement with the child's Social Worker and the Fostering Social worker that weekly summaries are acceptable. Of course, more frequent records may be needed from time to time, during periods of change or when issues arise.
- Foster Carers will use the Diary Record template, clearly recording the period the record covers (approximately six weekly).
- Foster Carers will **securely** e-mail diary records to the Fostering Social Worker by replying to an e-mail sent by the Fostering Service. This should be one week prior to each supervision, unless a different timescale is requested.
- Fostering Social Workers will read a random selection of those diary records prior to each supervision. The Fostering Social Worker will acknowledge receipt and confirm via e-mail that a random sample of records have been read. This e-mail confirmation will be added to Liberi case notes.
- The Fostering Social Worker will upload the diary records to the **child / young person's** Liberi file and notify the child / young person's Social Worker. It is the responsibility of the child/young person's Social Worker to read these as and when they consider necessary and inform the child's care plan.
- At the end of the placement Foster Carers should ensure that all diary records have been forwarded to the Fostering Social Worker to upload to the child/young person's Liberi file.

7. Additional considerations

It is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to inform the Fostering Service and Child's Social Worker of any concerns / incidents / significant changes with a child/young person in placement or within the fostering household. E-mail should not be relied on solely to do this and a telephone call is recommended. This is in addition to the information being clearly recorded in the diary record and a note made of who was informed and when.

The Fostering Regulations require the Fostering Service to record and report certain events that take place within a foster home (Schedule 7 Notifiable Events). It is essential therefore that Foster Carers immediately inform of the following:

1. Death of a child in placement.
2. Information in respect of an individual in the foster home under sections 35, 36, 39, 41 or 45 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
3. Serious illness or accident of a child in placement.
4. Outbreak in the foster home of any infectious disease which in the opinion of a general practitioner attending the home is sufficiently serious to be so notified.
5. Allegation that a child placed with foster carers has committed a serious offence.
6. Involvement or suspected involvement of a child placed with foster carers in sexual exploitation.
7. Serious incident relating to a child placed with foster carers necessitating calling the police to the foster carers home.
8. A child placed with foster carers is missing from the placement.
9. Any serious complaint about any foster carers approved by the fostering service.
10. Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster carers.

The Fostering Service recognise that there is likely to be a small cohort of foster carers who are not confident in using electronic communication systems or might have a preference to handwrite diary records. In these instances, Fostering Social Workers/Social Work Assistants, will explore ways to support the development of the required skills.

In exceptional circumstances where diary records are written, Foster Carers should still follow the above process, using the Diary Record Template (which can be provided hardcopy) with the following variances:

- Written Diary Records should be signed and dated by the Foster Carer.
- The Records should be given directly to the Fostering Social Worker at supervision, where the Social Worker will read a random sample and sign.
- Fostering Business Support will scan and upload the Diary Records onto the child / young person's Liberi file and shred the hardcopies.

FOSTER CARERS DIARY RECORD

This record can be amended to reflect daily or weekly routines, to avoid unnecessary repetition. With permanent foster placements the frequency of recording must be agreed at the Child in Care Review but be no less than weekly.

The Foster Carer will inform their Fostering Social Worker of any concerns / incidents / significant changes with a child / young person in placement or within the fostering household, as soon as is reasonably practical. This is in addition to the information being clearly recorded in the diary record and a note made of who was informed and when.

Any physical intervention / restraint will be recorded on the Kent Fostering Incident Form and submitted to the Fostering Social Worker and Child's Social Worker.

Child / Young Person	
Foster Carer(s)	
Placement Type <i>(Task centred / respite / E Bed / short breaks / permanency etc)</i>	

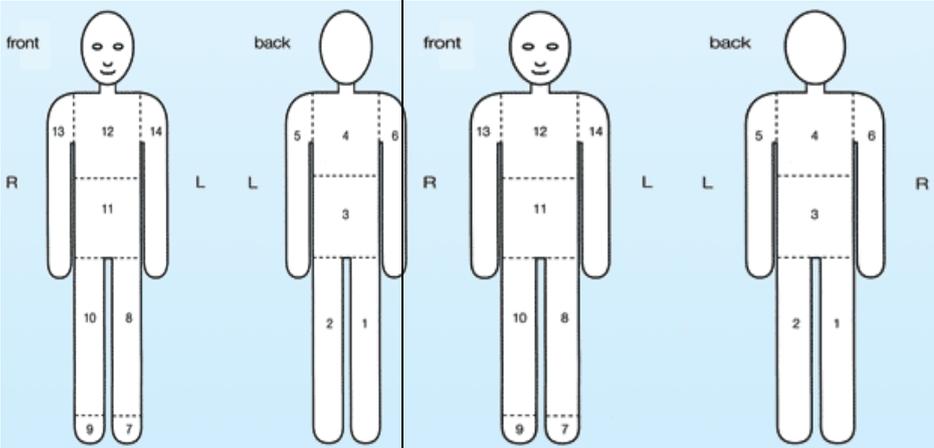
Date from:		Date to:	
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<p>Daily / weekly routine (Delete as appropriate) <i>(Once routine is established for the child / young person in placement: i.e. waking, sleeping, education, mealtimes, clubs, hobbies, contact etc this can be summarised here)</i></p>

Date	Record <i>(See guidance in Diary Record policy)</i>	Recorded by

FOSTER CARERS INCIDENT REPORT

Any physical intervention / restraint will be recorded on the Incident Form by the Foster Carer and submitted to the Fostering Social Worker and Child's Social Worker as soon as is reasonably practical.

Date of incident			
Location of incident			
Name of child / young person			
Name of foster carer(s)			
Name of all other children/young people & adults present at incident			
Start time of incident			
End time of incident			
Description of incident (what happened before, during and after: include behaviours, responses and reflections, any diversion/de-escalation strategies used, any restraint used)			
Body Map	Child	Adult	
Any injuries sustained	 <p>The body map section contains four diagrams of human figures on a light blue background. The first two are for a 'Child' and the last two are for an 'Adult'. Each figure has a front view on the left and a back view on the right. The front view is labeled 'front' above it, and the back view is labeled 'back' above it. The front view also has 'R' on the left side and 'L' on the right side. The back view also has 'L' on the left side and 'R' on the right side. Each figure is divided into 14 numbered regions by dashed lines: 1-2 (feet), 3 (lower torso), 4 (upper torso), 5-6 (shoulders), 7-9 (lower legs), 10-11 (lower torso), 12-14 (upper torso/arms).</p>		

Medical check		Offered <input type="checkbox"/>	Accepted <input type="checkbox"/>
Agencies informed	LADO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
	Medical services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
	County Out of Hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
	Fostering Out of Hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
	Police	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
	Child's social worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
	Fostering social worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date
Signed Foster Carer		Date	
Any further comments or reflections			
Any reflections on incident with or by child			
Signed Child's Social Worker		Date	
Signed Fostering Team Manager		Date	