

Practice Guidance for Foster Carers Recordings

The purpose of this guidance is to offer clarity for foster carers as to the expectations for the recordings they undertake which should demonstrate the progress and development of the children/young people in their care.

Standards and Regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.
Standard 26 - Records.

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

Standard 1 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.
Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.
Standard 4 - Know how to communicate effectively.

This Practice Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Recording Policy.

Who should keep recordings?

Regardless of whether you are mainstream, or kinship foster carers, you will be expected to keep recordings of the children/young people's progress in your care.

Advice regarding the format and content of these recordings should be offered by your Supervising Social Worker soon after approval.

Why should foster carers keep recordings?

Maintaining and keeping records is essential in helping achieve good outcomes for looked after children and importantly assists foster carers in having both historical and up to date information which can be shared with other professionals.

Effective recording is central to good practice, helps with informed decision making and assists with your input to the range of meetings / reviews and other forums where decisions are being made about the children and young people placed with you.

Maintaining appropriate records is also important in situations where a foster carer is subject to an allegation or complaint. It is essential for a foster carer to be able to refer to a record of a situation, incident or conversation that may have led to an allegation or complaint being made against them.

Principles of good recording

To achieve consistency with your recording, remember that it may be accessed by others including the child/young person in later life, so it's helpful to recognise some key principles:

- be accurate – limit your comments to specifics (incidents / events etc).
- be factual not judgemental or opinionated – detail facts only.
- be confidential – keep all recorded information safe.
- keep records up to date – regular recording should be a routine.
- ensure children/young people are aware of the recordings and what they will include.

Recording Format:

Generally, effective recording assists with:

- recalling events and incidents accurately and in a timely manner.
- detailing both positive and negative issues.
- informing decision making at reviews and other meetings.
- providing back up information when advocating on behalf of children/young people.
- protecting you and your family from complaints / allegations.

Recording Content:

Below is a general guide of examples of what should be included in your recordings:

- Family time - with the child's family/others, how was the child, how were the family/others, when they did not turn up and any reason given.
- Details of visits, meetings with social workers or other professionals and the child's reaction if any.
- School/nursery/educational setting - any important conversations you have with school, open evening, concerns or good things.
- Dates of medical or dental appointments and treatment given. Include dates of cancelled or rearranged appointments.
- Dates and types of immunisations.
- Date, type and length of any illnesses.

- Details of any accidents or injuries (name any witnesses and action taken). Record the time, date and name of the social worker to whom the incident was reported.
- Comments the child makes that give you cause for concern, record these using the child's own words.
- Details of the child's behaviour that causes concern. Record their actual behaviour, what happened before the behaviour and how you dealt with it.
- Any positive improvements, achievements and happy events for the child.
- Dates when the child is away from the foster home – with family, friends, school trips, introductions to new carers.
- If the child/young person goes missing and action taken.
- Details of times when the child is with other carers such as babysitters.

- Any involvement with the Police must be recorded and recorded/reported immediately.
- Details of any theft or damage caused by the child.
- Details of any specific incidents, events or changes of circumstances of your household, include any disagreements with the child or their family.
- Any significant milestones in the child's development such as their first word or first steps.
- Any other significant event or information

Daily and Weekly Diary Recording Logs

Recordings should be completed on a regular basis to record events / incidents / children's achievements and any issues of note which would be helpful as a reference for you or for informing other professionals involved with the child's time in your care.

Whether you complete a daily or a weekly log should be agreed between you and your SSW.

Generally, using your diary log for **daily recording** is more appropriate for:

- new care arrangements: where it is particularly important to record a child's progress; interaction with your family; recording key issues which can be used to inform written reports or key meetings; reviews etc.
- recording important related activities and appointments e.g. court proceedings; contact arrangements; a child's response to family-time.
- detailing a child's achievements at school; key social events; recording key health and development milestones

Using your diary sheet for **weekly recording** may be more appropriate for:

- settled, longer term or permanent care arrangements where detailed day by day recording is not necessary.
- providing a weekly summary or highlighting any important key facts and observations over the previous week.

Record Keeping:

1. Child's Information File / Folder

Foster carers should be provided with a range of essential information about the children/young people and this information needs to be kept in a separate physical file or electronic folder (one for each child/young person).

If you receive hard/physical copies of documents, it is recommended you purchase a folder/ring binder for this purpose (you can use part of your provided weekly allowance for this). This folder should be stored somewhere secure such as a lockable cabinet.

You may receive information electronically; this information needs to be stored safely on your device (further guidance is highlighted below).

The file/folder should contain the following essential information:

- Looked After Children's Child Care Reviews
- Health Needs Assessments
- Children's Placement Plans
- Medical Consent/Medication Records
- Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Education Support Plans
- School Reports (any related education and training information or reports)
- Delegated Decision Tool
- Accident / Incident Recording forms
- Individual Safer Caring Plan / Risk Assessment(s)
- Missing Person reports
- Daily / Weekly Diary Recording logs

If you have any other related child placement information linked to any of the above, then also place these in the child's information file / electronic folder.

2. Storing information electronically

It is likely that some information concerning the children in your care, or you as foster carers will be sent to you electronically, via email. It is essential that the service has your up-to-date email address, and any changes need to be shared in a timely manner with your Supervising Social Worker. The electronic recording system used by Social Care staff can thereby be kept up to date.

If you are storing information electronically it is essential that this information cannot be accessed by others in the household who are not permitted to have sight of the information. It is advised that information and documents are stored in a password protected file or folder on your device.

Foster carer recording can be completed electronically and sent, via email, to your Supervising Social Worker via Galaxkey. It is advised that you only use initials for the children/young people to maintain confidentiality.

Most email addresses used by foster carers (e.g. Gmail, Outlook, AOL) are secure, some older email addresses such as BT internet and NTL world are not, and documents being sent to and from these email accounts should be password protected.

It is important that the Fostering Service and foster carers are mindful of and adhere to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker if you are unsure about sending / receiving and storing information electronically.

3. Oversight and advice for your recording

Oversight and supervision of your recording should be undertaken by your Supervising Social Worker. They will periodically ask to see your recordings (the daily/weekly diary logs) and are expected to confirm verification has taken place with your supervision record.

If you need any advice or help with your recording, please discuss with your Supervising Social Worker.

You should also undertake a recordings training course on a 3-yearly basis.

4. Child's 'Life Story' / Memory Box Information

Foster carers should keep separate and safe a range of information / records / memorabilia / materials that contribute to a child's life story. These may include photos; photo albums; video; children's drawings; certificates and awards for achievement; souvenirs etc.

You should be proactive in keeping any appropriate records / materials while a child is living with you which would help reflect a story of their time in your care.

This information may need to be made available for other professionals undertaking life story work with a placed child.

All life story records and materials should ALWAYS accompany the child when moving from your care.

What happens to the records when a child/young person leaves your care

When you are aware a child/young person will be leaving your care, you must speak to your Supervising Social Worker about the confidential information you hold about the child/young person. This will include your recordings. An agreement about where this information should be stored post-placement should be made.

All documents which are already held by BCFT such as Placement or Care Plans, Legal Orders, PEP documents, CiC Review documents should be destroyed.

Life Story /Memory Box information should go with the child(ren)/young person.

Electronic recordings should be emailed to the SSW and uploaded onto the carers' LCS file. This could be completed intermittently through the duration of the child/young person's time with the carer(s).

Paper recordings should accompany the child/young person on to their next care arrangement and be given to the next carer responsible for the child/young person's care. Where a young person turns 18 years old, their recordings should be held by BCFT and stored securely in Birksland.

What happens to historical recordings for children/young people you have left your care.

Where you have historical recordings in your possession from children/young people you have previously cared for, arrangements need to be made to bring these back into the possession of BCFT. Foster carers should speak to their SSWs and agree a process which will enable the recordings to be received and stored at Birksland.