



**Children and Families Social Work
Fostering Service
Foster Carer - Recording Policy**

Introduction

Foster carers with the day to day care of a child are in a privileged position and are best placed to capture a child's childhood by recording day to day information. In capturing the time a child is in your care you will assist the child in building up a picture of the child they are, the struggles they face and the achievements they attain. It is important to remember the child in your care now will one day be an adult and, as an adult, they are likely to want to read their file to make sense of their early life.

It is of vital importance that you record a balanced picture for the child, so often good days are recorded as such 'good day' without further expansion on what was 'good'. However on a more challenging day the events are recorded in detail creating a largely negative picture of the child. This policy sets out how and what foster carers should record.

Legal Framework

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a set of EU-wide data protection rules that have been brought into UK law as the Data Protection Act 2018.gives details on who can store personal data about another person and covers both computer held and paper records

Foster carers hold and record information on children in care but they hold this on behalf of M K Council. The information belongs to the fostering agency and, at the end of a placement must be returned. However, we advise you to keep a record of the child's name, date arrived, date left and the date information was passed to the fostering service.

The Act allows anyone who has written information to access it at a later stage therefore if a foster carer does have the need to look at their recordings at a later date – perhaps because of a complaint or allegation – foster carers are entitled to have access to the records they made.

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2011 (Annex3) sets out the 7 dimensions of development needs for children – Health, Education, Family and Social Relationships, Emotional and Behavioural Development, Identity, Social Presentation and Self Care Skills. In order for children to flourish and reach their potential in each of these developmental areas foster carers need to provide a nurturing and encouraging placement where they have understanding, knowledge and skills to ensure that each child achieves their best outcomes.

The National Minimum Standards (2011) standard 26 details how the Fostering Service should record and secure children's records.

In recording a child's time in care the foster carer should consider how they are offering opportunities for children to flourish and capture the child's experience of these in the weekly and monthly logs.

Purpose of Recording

Keeping written records has a dual purpose. It is helpful to the child in placement and to the foster carer.

For the child

- Shows that you value the history
- Maintain history and future continuity for the child or young person
- To accurately recall behaviours or incidents (including dates), either positive or negative and provide a balanced picture of particular events
- It can note the progress of a child and develop a picture of the child's pattern of behaviours in various situations
- To inform decision making at reviews, placement agreement meetings, planning meetings and case conferences
- Support an application for additional help, e.g. counselling, by providing examples and frequency of types of behaviour

For the foster carer

- To consider how you are meeting the holistic needs of the child
- Help you to review your practice and identify your training needs
- Provide information needed for writing a report for a professional meeting or evidence for a court statement
- Reduce the risk to you and your family of allegations or complaints while the child is in your care

What to Record

- Developmental milestones e.g. loss of first tooth
- Positive incidents/achievements
- Fun times
- Significant friendships
- Educational achievements, parents evening, concerts, extra tuition etc
- Comments the child makes that gives you cause for concern. Wherever possible use the child's own words
- Details of specific incidents, events or changes in circumstances of any of the family
- Disagreements or complaints concerning any family member and how you dealt with it
- Details of any accidents or injuries, however slight (you are also required to report this to the child care and fostering social worker.
- Dates for reviews, placement meeting, PEP's etc and note decisions made
- All medical appointments, treatment decisions and medication administered
- All contact with all professionals including the child's social worker
- All contact visits between the child and his/her family or relatives and any significant interactions including telephone calls, letters etc
- Details of alternative care givers, e.g. baby sitters; who they were etc
- Requests made to the agency for help, support or resources
- Details of damage of theft by the foster child
- Involvements with the police – reasons and outcome

How to Record

Accessed via the MKC foster carer's website are foster carers feedback forms – **Weekly Log** and **Monthly Summary**. Foster carers will complete these forms for each individual child in their care.

When children first enter care and whilst in a time limited fostering arrangement it is expected that **daily logs** will be completed and sent to the child care social worker with a copy to the fostering social worker on a weekly basis. This will be agreed at the Placement Planning meeting and will be subject to review throughout the child's stay with the foster carer.

Foster carers will use their **weekly logs** to review the previous month and submit a **monthly summary** to the child care social worker with a copy to the foster social worker. This will give an opportunity for the foster carer to note any change in the child's development or behaviour.

For children who have been in the same placement for 12 months plus it may be adequate to submit a **monthly summary**, however without a number of daily logs completed it may be difficult for the foster carer to recall all the events of the previous 4 weeks. The frequency of foster carer feedback will be agreed with the child care social worker.

- Be Clear - What is written needs to make sense to someone reading it in a few months or even years
- Be clear about fact and opinion. It is acceptable to record both but it must be clear which is which and what evidence leads to your opinion
- Keep recording as brief and factual as possible
- Openness with the child about recording is important. It is good practice to talk to the child about what you write and encourage them to add their comments
- Each child requires their own recording
- Care needs to be taken about what is written in each child's file. Other children will often be part of an incident or event but anything that is private about one child should not be recorded on another child's file
- Avoid slang or jargon
- Avoid angry or negative phrases
- Use the child's words if recording specific quotation; avoid adding your own interpretation.
- If quoting a child make this clear (Jon said 'he hates his sister' is different from Jon hates his sister)
- Record positive events and achievements
- Don't just give names of people say who they are I in years to come there may be different people involved in the child's life and they may not know who is who
- **REMEMBER** one day the child will be an adult and is very likely to read your recordings, what you record will inform them about the child they were

Specific Recording

It is a requirement of the fostering service to report to Ofsted incidents under Schedule 8 – Fostering Regulations 2011, these include:

- where children abscond or go missing
- where physical intervention was necessary
- where there has been a serious accident
- where the child or a family member has made an allegation against the foster carer and this is investigated in line with child protection procedures

If a child goes missing or absconds from a foster carer it is the foster carer responsibility to inform Children's social care. Out of office hours this is reported to the Emergency Social Work Team.

Foster carers are then required to complete the Absconding/Missing pro –forma. Copies of this form need to be sent to the child care worker and the fostering social worker.

If it has become necessary to physically restrain a child, the foster carer is responsible to inform Children’s Social Care. Out of office hours this is reported to the Emergency Social Work Team. Foster carers are then required to complete the Positive Handling pro –forma. Copies of this form need to be sent to the child care worker and the fostering social worker.

If a child sustains a serious injury or has a serious accident it is the foster carer’s responsibility to firstly seek appropriate medical attention then inform Children’s Social Care. Out of office hours this is reported to the Emergency Social Work Team. Foster carers are required to log this incident in full, including medical attention sought. For further information please refer to the foster carer handbook.

Financial Expenditure

Foster carers are responsible and accountable in ensuring the child’s fostering allowance is spent appropriately to ensure the child presents as a well-cared for child with sufficient and appropriate clothing, is engaged in leisure activities and are offered life chances to succeed and build self - esteem.

Foster carers receive a basic maintenance allowance covering the costs of providing for the child day to day. There are also additional elements for the child – pocket money, clothing and life chances. Some children also receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The fostering Service sets out the minimum clothing requirement for a child entering care (see foster carers handbook) and it is expected that these items will be added to during the time the child is placed.

When children enter care foster carer should record an inventory of the child’s clothing and belongings (see inventory document). Where the child has less than the minimum clothing, an emergency clothing payment can be made by the fostering service.

Foster carers will record their spending and keep receipts of clothing purchased.

Foster carers caring for a child with a disability who is in receipt of DLA will agree with the child care and fostering social worker how this money will be spent and what part (if any) will be saved for the child. This will also be recorded in the placement plan or in foster carer’s supervision record.

For children aged 16 years and above (and if agreed by all parties) the child will receive their pocket money, clothing money and life chances money directly. It will be agreed and recorded how this will be paid in the placement plan or in foster carer’s supervision record.

When a child leaves a foster carer the inventory of the child’s clothing and belongings will also be completed.

Storage

All information in respect of the child needs to be kept confidential and stored in a secure place. The fostering service is able to provide lockable boxes to keep information securely stored if required.

As Children’s Social Care move to a paperless office with the use of the Integrated Children’s System (ICS) all information stored electronically. Foster carers are encouraged to move to electronic recording. Foster carer’s electronic recording will be pasted directly into the child’s electronic file. Manual recording will be scanned into the child’s file.

For foster carers recording electronically: foster carers will complete the Foster Carers Feedback recording weekly and recording monthly documents. Foster carers will use the password protected e-mail to send the information to the child care social worker and will copy the fostering social worker in. The child care social worker will file the recordings on to the child's file.

No information will be kept on the foster carers hard drive and all information will be deleted once the child moves out of their care.

For foster carers recording manually: Foster carers will use the Foster Carer Feedback recording weekly and recording monthly documents. These will be completed and returned to your fostering social worker. The fostering social worker will pass this information on to the child care social worker and it will be filed on the child's file.

Milton Keynes Council stores all information electronically on the Integrated Children's System (ICS) and can be accessed by the child/adult at any time. See access to information literature.

Life Story Work

Every child who comes to live in a foster family arrives with a past and then the foster family becomes part of their present and future. Whatever time they come to live in your family becomes a chapter of their life. During the child's stay the foster carer will offer the child a great number of experiences and each of these will be part of the jigsaw making them the person they will be.

The placement with the foster carer is part of the child's life that will go on to be part of their history, which could be lost without the foster carer valuing the child and taking time to record the information with care.

The foster carer will collect and collate information which records the child's time with them using a life story book and memory box.

For further information refer to the foster carers handbook and it is recommended that foster carers attend Life Story training.

Foster Carers Diaries

Foster carer's diaries should only be used for recording appointments, times of visits, calls etc. This is because diaries tend not to be kept securely and locked away. Diaries could hold information about other children or family members which pose a potential breach of confidentiality.

Child is no longer in your care

When a child moves on from your care all information pertaining to that child is required to be passed back to the child care or fostering social worker. The child care social worker is responsible for the safe keeping of the child's information for the designated number of years.

If a foster carer has any significant difficulties in expressing him or herself in writing, support and alternative strategies to meet the requirements in this policy will need to be implemented.