

RECORDING AND RETENTION POLICY FOR FOSTER CARERS

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

Foster carers are required to keep records about the children in their care as set out in [Standard 26 of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards](#).

This guidance explains the requirements and expectations of Nottingham Children and Young People's Services of all foster carers, in all aspects of recording. It aims to promote good practice and ensure recording, and the handling of information, about a child in care are compliant with relevant legislation.

FOSTER CARERS MUST KEEP RECORDS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS

- As a record of a child's life in foster care.
- To monitor and measure change in a child/young person
- To aid assessment and reports for reviews and care planning.
- To help in the event of a disclosure or reportable incident.
- As a record of the family time that a child/young person will have with their parents and connected network.
- As a record of significant events, such as school achievements, birthdays, or anniversaries.
- To assist in life story work.
- To provide evidence in Court Proceedings if required.
- To ensure both the child/young person and the Foster Carers are safeguarded and provided with the appropriate support.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

The Data Protection Act 2018, the Department of Health Caldicott Standards, the Freedom of Information Act 2004 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) require all those involved in the handling of information to safeguard the integrity and confidentiality of information they hold, whether it is in electronic or paper form. Information about a person must not be accessed or shared by any other person, unless there is a risk to any person if it is not disclosed, or unless it can be lawfully justified.

An Agreed sharing system needs to be in place. The foster carer will share information with the child's social worker and their fostering supervising social worker and will ensure that:

- Any information given to the carer by Nottingham Children's Services about a child/young person in paper form is kept secure in the home using a lockable box/filing

cabinet. This includes any paper records produced by the carer e.g. diaries or recordings.

- The carer needs to know which other members of the team are working with the child/ young person and who needs to have access to the information they keep - usually this will be their supervising social worker and the child/young person's social worker.

CONFIDENTIALITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND WHO HAS ACCESS

Confidentiality is important in the role as foster carer(s) because Information in the wrong hands can cause immense difficulties for the child /young person, their family and to the reputation of Nottingham City Council.

Many of the children/young people, and sometimes the families that foster carers work with, tell the foster carer very private things and the foster carer needs to make sure that is secure and only passed on to the correct people. Everyone has the right to privacy and dignity.

Good Practice Advice in Managing Sensitive Information

- When using IT systems to record any information in regard to a child/young person foster carers must ensure that they always lock their computer when leaving it. Foster carers must not leave it unattended.
- Passwords to accounts must always be kept secure and never shared.
- Putting confidential papers away safely after using them is essential. Any confidential paperwork should be kept in a locked cabinet/box.
- Foster carers should not discuss matters which are personal to a particular child/young person or family in groups with other people.
- Foster carers must not repeat, to relatives or others not involved in the care of the child, anything that child/young person may have told them about private matters.
- Ensuring that there are no other persons present, who do not have a role in caring or supporting the child, when meetings, visits, or conversations are held virtually (e.g. via Microsoft Teams).
- IT files that are created as a part of normal family life (photos, videos etc.) should only ever be stored on IT equipment in the foster home that the foster carer is able to share with the child/young person in their care. Encryption of these files is not necessary, but consideration should be given as to where they should be stored, taking into account the looked after child's wishes and feelings and remaining sensitive to the relationships in the foster family.
- Foster carers must never transfer electronic files they store regarding the children/young person in their care to any other party (parent of child/young person or other family member, other foster carer, any other colleague, social worker) using information technology systems (personal Email, iCloud, Drop Box, One Drive, Google Drive etc.). These systems do not have the correct levels of encryption to keep the files safe and secure. Foster carers will need to speak with their supervising

social worker or the child social worker if files need to be shared or transferred where a secure route will be agreed.

COMPLETING AND SHARING FOSTERING LOGS

Foster carers are required to keep logs that documents the daily events of the child/s life, this could be keeping in touch with birth family times, social groups they attend etc. Any information about the child should be kept secure and locked away. If foster carers choose to complete paper logs these need to be locked away within a secure cabinet/box. If Foster Carers choose to record their logs on an electronic device these will need to be kept within a secure folder and would need to be kept locked and password protected. This information should not be visible to anybody but the foster carers.

Here are some pointers to help any foster carers complete their daily logs.

- Avoid emotional or judgemental language. It's not a personal diary or a place to vent frustrations.

- Think of the daily log as a tracking system for observing successes, differences in behaviour and how you have intervened with the child/young people in your care. Be clear with your language and say what you see.

- Hold in mind the audience. This includes the child/young person, their birth family, professionals and, potentially, the court if requested.

- Be thoughtful with your language and how you phrase and comment on what you notice and see. Think again about the audience and how this may be interpreted. Remember, language is powerful.

- Be clear. Is it a fact (something that has actually happened which can be verified or corroborated), an opinion (a belief or interpretation of events – this means it's subjective) or hearsay (information told to you by others, which is relevant, but you cannot personally verify)?

- Don't use jargon or acronyms. These might make sense to you but may exclude others from understanding what you're communicating.

- Use the initials of people who are in or who have visited the household. This is in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance requirements.

STORAGE AND RETENTION OF RECORDS

During the course of a placement, foster carers must ensure that information is kept secure and cannot be accessed by anyone else. This should be in a locked

file or cabinet, or secure use of a computer (locked and password protected).

At the end of a placement, any reports or other records provided to the foster carer or kept in respect of the child must be returned to the child's social worker or their supervising social worker as any information in regard to a child needs to follow them through to their next placement.

It should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker prior to the placement ending how any additional information and photographs regarding the child are managed and if these need to be kept and if so, how these will be stored.

If a Foster Carer is selling or disposing of a computer, laptop or phone in which they have previously recorded and stored sensitive and personal information regarding a child, this information needs to be removed from this device and restored back to factory settings prior to selling/safety disposing of the device.