



Foster Care Recording Policy and Guidance

March 2025

Legislation

The Children Act 1989 places a duty upon fostering agencies to keep detailed records concerning looked after children. This information includes family history, involvement with the agency, progress that the child may make, reports concerning the welfare of the child. Information kept on looked after children's files are kept until the child reaches 75 years of age.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require agencies to maintain records for each foster carer approved, and for applicants who withdraw prior to approval or who are not approved. Foster carer files are kept for a minimum of 10 years.

The National Minimum Standards for fostering services are issued by the Secretary of State under section 23 of the CSA 2000. The Secretary of State will keep the standards under review and may publish amended standards as appropriate.

The standards are issued for use by Ofsted, who take them into account in the inspection of fostering services. They will also be important in other ways. The standards may be used by providers and staff in self-assessment of their services; they provide a basis for the induction and training of staff and carers; they can be used by parents, children and young people as a guide to what they should expect a fostering service to provide and to do as a minimum; and they can provide guidance on what is required when setting up a fostering service.

The processing of personal data is subject to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

Introduction

Within their role, foster carers have access to a wide range of information and records. The records may relate to themselves or to children, and their families, placed in their care. This Policy and Guidance aims to set out to

- Identify the types of information and records that foster carers hold.
- Recognise to whom the records belong.
- Clarify how the records should be stored.
- Clarify what should be recorded.
- Clarify how information should be recorded.

The information that foster carers may have can be broadly categorised into three main areas

- Information about fostering in general.
- Information about themselves
- Information about children placed in their care.

The table below lists the sorts of records and information that a foster carer may have: -

General Fostering Information	Records about themselves	Child based records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment information • Preparation material • Sample foster care forms • Foster Carer Handbook • Fostering network information • Training material • Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy Fostering assessment, including own contribution. • DBS return • Registration letter • Foster Care Agreement (general) • Supervision notes • Foster Carer Review and outcome letter • Training invitations + arrangements • Personal Development Plan • Correspondence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral • Chronology • Placement Information record • Placement Plan • Care Plans • Adoption Plans • PEP/ Education record • Health record/Plan • CLA Reviews and minutes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and Safety check	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment and Progress Record• Transition Plan• Pathway Plan• Court Reports• Life Story Work• Reports for other professionals e.g., home/school diary, behaviour chart• Family Time records• Appointments diary• Daily log <p>Additionally foster carers must keep photographs, earl pictures and other memorabilia belonging to the child in a memory box and life story book.</p>
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For the duration of their registration, foster carers will keep all of the below information.

- **The general fostering information is not confidential but foster carers need to have access to the information to assist with the task of fostering.**
- **The information about themselves is obviously their own personal information and foster carers may share it with whom they wish. However, in doing so they are not free to disclose information about a third party.**
- **The information about any child placed with them and their families is to be kept confidential in a lockable filing box.**

On ceasing to be a foster carer the following arrangements apply

- **any information that falls into the category of general fostering may be kept.**
- **Foster carers may keep any information that they have been given about themselves, except for their identity 'badge.'**
- **Child based information held by foster carers, whether it has been provided for them or if they have made the record, must be returned to the agency once the placement has ended or if the foster carers cease to foster. The only exceptions are if the foster carers secure the child's placement with a residence order, special guardianship, or adoption order or with the young person's permission (for example, the child may reach 18 but remain with the family informally and wish for the information to be available 'at home'). This is because the agency is the data controller, and the foster carer has been recording information on the agency's instruction.**

Computer use

Where records are held on a personal computer, the foster carers must take measures to ensure the security of the information.

All child-based information must be stored in a secure system, so foster carers must.

- **Have a password entry to a private e-mail system, not just the general family system and**
- **Be able to store documents in a private folder that requires password entry.**

Foster carers should also be mindful that in deleting information, it may only delete the access to a document and the document may still exist on the hard drive.

When emailing records to the agency, foster carers must use an encryption tool to reduce the risk of malicious interception. An encryption tool ensures the information is safely transmitted and these can be downloaded for use from the internet. Electronic records must be sent to the supervising social worker on a weekly basis.

Foster carers should take appropriate measures to reduce the risk of cyber-attacks, such as ransomware, malware, and phishing. This should normally include installing anti-virus software on their personal computer.

Foster carer's case recording

Foster carers should complete daily diaries for each child in their care. They should be written to the child as these are the child's records. This will assist them in making contributions to Children Looked After reviews and Care Planning Meetings. They should also keep a record of all medication administered.

Children's records should be read and signed by supervising social workers on supervisory visits. Paper records should be collected and scanned onto the children's records on at least a quarterly basis. As stated above, carers completing electronic recording should send these in on a weekly basis for each child.

The service advises that the records should be recorded using the following template, unless otherwise agreed and that these should be kept together in a folder.



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The reasons these records are required are:

- **To help children to understand what has happened while they have lived in the foster family.**
- **To accurately recall behaviour or incidents and provide a balanced picture of events.**
- **Assist in looking at the progress of a placement over time and developing a picture of the child's pattern of behaviour.**
- **Inform decision-making at reviews, planning meetings and case conferences.**
- **Help the foster carer to review and develop practice.**
- **Provide the information needed for court proceedings.**
- **Support an application for additional help e.g., therapy.**
- **Reduce the risk to foster carers and their families, of allegations resulting from misinterpretations of events, while the child is in a foster family, and, in some cases, after the child has moved on.**

Additionally, the foster carer may keep a diary for appointments and a personal reflective log which should not include the child's personal identifiable information.

At the Placement Planning Meeting, there should be a decision as to

- **what recording is required?**
- **who the information shall be shared with**
- **by what means the information will be shared**
- **how frequently the information will be distributed.**

In terms of writing daily diaries foster carers should follow some basic guidelines.

- **There needs to be one diary per child. The language should be simple and jargon free.**
- **The record should not be overly long, enough information to be able to recall the event. A daily diary would be ideal but weekly summaries are better than no records.**
- **Whilst the diaries are in part designed to record events that may affect the well-being of the foster carer's family, they should also be used to provide a picture of family life for the child to help them recall interesting, amusing and even sad family events.**
- **Record facts.**
- **If opinion is recorded, then say this is your view and why you think it.**
- **The diaries should be written as events take place and signed and dated. If any information is changed or added later this should be clear from the record.**
- **Remember that the diary may be shared with the child and/or birth family. They should be aware that you are keeping the diary about them. It may be possible for them to contribute to the diary or at least read it regularly. Where there is disagreement, it is helpful to make a record of it.**
- **The child's social worker and the supervising social worker should read the diaries on each visit, and sign, and date that they have read it.**
- **Foster carers should give completed diary sheets to their supervising social worker and these should be uploaded onto the child's record at least every 3 months. Electronic records should be sent in on a weekly basis.**

The sorts of things that should be recorded are: -

- **Achievements big and small, certificates, awards, new skills learned.**

- **Details of meetings/visits by social workers and other professionals**
- **Dates of reviews or any other meeting concerning the child, list the participants and the key decisions.**
- **Dates of any school or education meetings, and key decisions. Keep a record of achievements, schools attended.**
- **Dates of any health appointments, and key decisions. Keep a record of any treatment, medication given, immunisations, and illnesses.**
- **Details of any family time visits or telephone calls, letters etc. Name the person who has contacted the child. Note any reaction the child may have to the family time. Keep a record of where the child's family is living.**
- **Details when the child is away from home, visiting family or friends, or if they are missing.**
- **Details of times when alternative care is given – babysitting arrangements.**
- **Details of any specific incidents or complaints or disagreements**
- **Details of any behaviour or comments from the child that give rise to concern. Make a note of actions taken. This may help to identify what triggers such behaviour and how you have responded.**
- **Detail any accidents or injuries. Describe what, when where and how the accident happened. What follow up action was taken. Record when the incident was reported to which social worker.**
- **Detail any theft or damage caused by the foster child. This will be required for any claims.**
- **Detail any involvement with the police, noting the date, which officer was involved and the reason for the involvement. Detail any request made to the agency for support or resources and any difficulties reported to the social worker, note the date of the request, the response and when it was received.**

When children join a fostering family

When children move into a fostering family, there must be a Placement Planning Meeting. This should be attended by the child's social worker, supervising social worker, foster carer(s), the child (if appropriate) and the child's family (as appropriate). This meeting is the forum to discuss the child's care arrangements but should also include an agreement about what records the foster carer should make, with whom they will be shared, how frequently and by what method.

The foster carer should expect to receive a copy of

- **Placement Plan including Delegated Authority Checklist**
- **Care Plans**
- **Child specific Safe Caring Agreement**
- **CLA review minutes**
- **Care Planning Meeting Minutes**
- **Personal Education Plan**
- **Health record**
- **Care Orders**
- **Any other relevant information**

When a child moves out of a fostering family or when a foster carer ends their registration

When a child moves, the carer's supervising social worker is responsible for retrieving any care documentation relating to that child.

The social worker should file the information on the child, on the child's file. Duplicated information should be destroyed.

When a foster carer ceases their registration, the supervising social worker should collect their identity badge if this has been issued.