

<b>Manual:</b>	Fostering Service Procedures; Foster Carers Handbook
<b>Title:</b>	Records and Recording Keeping (FCH/041)
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	03/03/2017
<b>Next Review Due:</b>	03/03/2020

## **INTRODUCTION**

Providing clear and accurate records is a key part of a Foster Carer's role. The records produced belong to the Fostering Service. Children and young people can request to read the records either now or as adults in the future, so it is essential that Foster Carer's recording is given to the child's Social Worker for inclusion on the child's file

Foster Carers must produce recording in accordance with this procedure, and Standard 26 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

## **PURPOSE OF RECORDING**

Everyone working with looked after children and their families are involved in recording. Recording by Foster Carers has a number of important purposes including:

- Maintains history for the child as a coherent narrative
- Provides continuity for the child
- Protects the Foster Carer from allegations – this is particularly important if allegations/concerns are made known a long time after the alleged event.
- Provides an opportunity to reflect on placement and learn from errors and build upon good ideas
- Highlights a carers training and development needs
- Helps identify issues for the child
- Allows analysis of patterns of behaviour, including the identification of improvements and problems at an early stage
- Provides detail to assist Foster Carers who may be asked to attend Court. It also provides information to enable the Foster Carer to contribute to Looked After Reviews, Care Team meetings, Child Protection Conferences and other meetings.

## **RECORDING REQUIREMENTS**

Foster Carers should keep a daily record for each child in placement. The recording pro-forma should be used – see Appendix 1.

On a monthly basis during the Foster Carer's supervision, the recording must be shared with the Fostering Supervising Social Worker, who will check a sample of the records. The recording should then be securely e-mailed or handed to the child's Social Worker for their consideration and inclusion on the child's file.

The Fostering Supervising Social Worker can provide any guidance necessary to support the Foster Carer, and ensure that the records are of a good standard.

- Foster Carers are encouraged to record electronically and email their recording to the child's Social Worker using a password protection. For a small minority of Foster Carers who do not have a computer, records can be handwritten. Handwritten records should be passed to the Fostering Supervising Social Worker who will scan the documents to the child's Social Worker, and return the original records to the Foster Carer. If records are being handwritten, blank copies of the recording template can be printed, or provided by the Fostering Supervising Social Worker
- Daily recording should be produced within 48 hours and should be kept up to date.
- The Fostering Network estimate that daily recording should take on average between 5-10 minutes per day for each child to complete, although this will vary.
- The child should be aware of the existence of records and if appropriate, they should be aware of the contents.
- Parent and child Foster Carer's recording must be particularly precise, as developmental changes in the child and any change in parental care must be charted. The Foster Carer records form part of an assessment, and may be used in legal proceedings.

## **KEY ISSUES AND EVENTS TO RECORD**

The following are the key issues and events to be recorded, and the Foster Carer may have other points they wish to record:

- Brief daily record about the child
- Improvements and achievements of the child
- Any changes or concerns in behaviour or mood (including details of behaviours observed and what was happening before it started).
- Dates and times when the child is away from your care, including
  - with friends
  - Contact visits
  - Missing from home
  - With members of your support network/babysitters (details of who was caring for the child)
- Disagreements or complaints regarding any birth family members and how you responded to this
- Accidents or injuries (however minor) to the child. Describe what, where, when, and how it occurred. Note your actions and any witnesses to the accident. Note when you informed the child's Social Worker

- Medical, dental, and opticians appointments, and treatments and the outcome
- Contact with school, Social Worker, birth family and other professionals
- Contact visits and the child's response prior to, and afterwards
- Details of any damage or destructive behaviours by the child
- Involvement with the Police, including reasons and outcome
- Details of pocket money provided to the child and how the child spent or saved their money

### **TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE RECORDING**

1. Before you start, be clear why you are recording
2. Record as soon as possible
3. Use plain language and avoid jargon, ensuring discriminatory language is not used
4. Record facts
5. When you give an opinion, separate it from the facts and indicate why you came to your opinion
6. Record in a way that you would be happy for the child and birth family to read
7. Use initials for the child, If children in placement have the same initials, a second letter should be used so each child can be identified
8. Sign and date the recording

### **RECORDING BY LONG TERM FOSTER CARERS**

When a child is matched permanently with a long term Foster Carer and they are settled, if all care team members are in agreement, including the child's Social Worker and the Fostering Social Worker, then instead of daily recording, the Foster Carer can complete a weekly summary. Sufficient detail must be provided for all of the reasons detailed in the **Purpose of Recording** section above.

The Foster Carer should ensure they provide dates for the seven day period covered by the summary.

The long term carer must provide more detailed recording of any important events. The Fostering Supervising Social Worker can provide advice and guidance as necessary.

## **KEEPING A DIARY**

Foster Carers should keep a diary to ensure they have a record:

- Appointments for the child
- Contacts with children's services, including home visits
- Dates of notable incidents
- Dates the child is missing or not in their proper place
- Home visits
- Telephone calls
- Note of any immunisations
- Note of accident, incident, ill health or near miss

**NOTE** – any of the above events that impact on a child's development should be expanded in the daily recording

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO RECORDS WHEN A CHILD MOVES OR WHEN A FOSTER CARER DE-REGISTERS**

At the end of the placement, your recording and any other documents relating to the child must be returned to the child's Social Worker. The Fostering Social Worker can collect all of the documents you have and ensure they are passed to the child's Social Worker.

The Foster Carer should keep a record of the child's name and placement dates, and when you returned recording and documentation to the service.

When the Foster Carer de-registers, the Fostering Supervising Social Worker will collect all documentation, identity cards, freedom cards, and the secure storage box.

## **SAFE STORAGE OF RECORDS**

All information relating to the children in placement should be stored securely, and a locked box is provided by the Fostering Service for the safe storage of records, including diaries.

Information should only be shared with those who have the right to the information.

Photographs and other memorabilia should be treated as confidential information and only shared following discussion with the child's Social Worker and Fostering Supervising Social Worker

## **DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998**

The Data Protection Act regulates how personal information is used and protects individuals from misuse of personal details collected by them.

There are 8 rules known as the Data Protection Principals. These require personal information kept to be:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate
- Not kept longer than necessary
- Processed in accordance with an individual's rights
- Kept secure
- Not transferred without adequate protection

The County Council must comply with the principals. The Act (with some exceptions) gives individuals the right to find out what information is held about them by organisations, and this must be a consideration when written records are produced

Foster Carers hold and read information on behalf of Durham County Council, and the records belong to the County Council.

### **THE SECURITY OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

- Electronic recording and reports should be password protected before sending via e-mail
- Foster Carers should keep copies of emails regarding the child for the duration of the placement
- If carers hold children's information on a personal computer, they must ensure that it is kept confidential and access to the information restricted to the Foster Carer. If other family members use the computer, files relating to fostering must be password protected.
- Once the child moves on, information relating to the child must be removed from the computer
- When changing their computer, the Foster Carer should ensure that the hard drive is professionally wiped of all information.