

Recording Policy for Foster Carers

**Children's Services
December 2022**

POLICY INFORMATION SHEET	
Service Area	Children's Social Care
Date effective from	December 2022
Responsible Officer	Service Manager - Fostering
Date of Reviews	December 2023
Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (all staff named must adhere to guidance) 	Mandatory
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Related Document (s)	
Superseded Documents	2017 version

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1. Introduction

Recording is an essential part of the service provided to children and families. Effective recording practice supports positive care of children and informed planning on their behalf.

This policy should be read alongside the Sefton Supervision and Support of Foster Carers Policy.

This policy applies to children placed with Sefton foster carers.

Why should I Keep Records?

Providing information about foster children is a key part of the foster carer role. This information may contribute towards maintaining a history of the placement, assessments, participation in meetings or discussions in court. These records are being made as part of the child's file and should be viewed and written in that way.

Maintaining and keeping written records is essential in helping achieve good outcomes for cared for 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.

Recording is achieved in different ways and in different formats – this guidance provides an overview on the most appropriate ways of recording and retaining your records on the children and young people placed with you. Generally, effective recording assists with:

- recalling events and incidents accurately
- detailing both positive and negative issues
- reflecting the progress of a placement
- informing decision making at reviews and other meetings
- providing back up information when writing reports?
- protecting you and your family from complaints / allegations

The key role that foster carers play in recording is highlighted in the **Fostering Services National Minimum Standards** which state:

The foster carer understands the important supporting role they play in encouraging the child to reflect on and understand their history. The child, subject to age and understanding, is encouraged to keep appropriate memorabilia (including photographs) of their time in the placement. The fostering service makes this role clear to

their foster carers and ensures they can record, and help children make a record of (subject to age and understanding), significant life events.

NMS Fostering Services (26.7)

2. Principles of Good Recording

People have different styles and approaches to writing. Recording is a particular type of writing achieved for a particular purpose (different to Report Writing for example, where your opinions, views and judgements are often required). To achieve consistency with your recording, remember that it may be accessed by others now and/or in the future (including young people and adults who have been in care), so it's helpful to recognise some key principles:

- be accurate – limit your comments to specifics (incidents / events etc.)
- be factual not judgemental – detail facts rather than offer observations or opinions.
- write the record as if you are writing to the child/young person directly, so it is more meaningful and child centred. The fostering service will provide guidance and support to foster carers to make this shift in emphasis when recording.
- be confidential – keep all recorded information safe
- keep records up to date – regular recording should be a good practice routine

3. Records and Confidentiality

The information that foster carers may have can be broadly categorised into three main areas. Examples are given of the different types of information in the table below.

For the duration of their registration foster carers will keep:

- Information about fostering in general. General fostering information is not confidential but foster carers need to have access to the information to assist with the task of fostering;
- Information about themselves as foster carers. This should be stored as confidential.

For the duration of each placement foster carers will keep:

- Information about children placed in their care. Information about any child placed and their families must always be kept confidential.

The Fostering Service will provide a lockable, portable filing box in which to store confidential information and foster carers should ensure this is stored safely. The supervising social worker will periodically check the contents of the box as part of their supervisory role.

<p>General fostering information</p>	<p>Recruitment Information, Preparation material, Induction information, Foster Carer Handbook, Fostering Network information, Training material, Newsletters</p>
<p>Records about themselves as foster carers</p>	<p>Copy Form F, including own contribution; Disclosure and Barring Service return, Registration letter, Foster Care Agreement, Supervision notes, Foster Carer Review, Training invitations/arrangements, Certificates, Correspondence, Health and Safety check, Pet Assessment, Safer Caring Policy, Identity 'badge'</p>
<p>Records about the child</p>	<p>Foster Carers are provided with a range of essential information about the children placed and this needs to be kept in a separate file (one for each child placed). Do not store child placement related information in other files you use (e.g. Your Personal Development Portfolio). It is recommended you purchase a folder/ring binder for this purpose (you can use part of your weekly allowance for this).</p> <p>The file should contain the following essential information to be stored in the lockable box:</p> <p>Placement Plan, Care Plan, Personal Education Plan PEP/ Health Action Plan, Placement Planning Meeting minutes, Looked after Review report / minutes, Medication Record, Daily log, Child's passport, Correspondence relating to specific children.</p> <p>As appropriate - Risk Assessment for the child, Children and Family Assessment, Adoption Plan, Child's Health Record (red book), Child Protection Conference minutes, Needs Assessment for Leaving care, Transition Plan, Pathway Plan, Child's Permanence Report, Court Reports, Life Work, Reports for other professionals e.g. home/school diary, behaviour chart, Photos and memorabilia.</p> <p>Any records held electronically should be held on the secure pen drive provided by the service.</p> <p>Foster carer's weekly recordings will be stored in consultation with the supervising social worker and as set out in Section 4 of this procedure</p> <p>Child's 'Life Story' Records and Information</p> <p>Foster Carers need to keep separate and safe the 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. items held electronically be stored on the secure pen drive provided by the service.</p> <p>Foster carers should be proactive in keeping any appropriate records/materials while a child is placed with you which would help reflect a story of their</p>

placement Also, these may need to be made available for other professionals undertaking life story work with a placed child.

All Life Story records and materials will need to be made available to accompany the child when moving from placement.

4. Foster Carer Recordings

Foster carers must keep separate records for individual children who are placed with them. It is not acceptable to keep collective records when fostering two or more children.

Please note that for each of the methods of recording discussed below – handwritten, recording electronically, including via a secure pen drive, the supervising social worker and foster carer will agree in supervision, which method of recording and storage will be used.

Foster carers may be asked to provide the following records:

- Written contributions to Cared for Reviews;
- Written contributions to Child Protection Conferences (where applicable);
- Contributions to their own supervisory visits and annual foster carer reviews;
- Weekly records for each child in placement (this frequency applies to short term and long-term placements)
- Medication records.

These records are required for the following purposes:

- To accurately recall behaviour or incidents related to the child and provide a balanced picture of events;
- To assist in looking at the progress of a placement over time and developing a picture of the child's pattern of behaviour;
- To inform decision-making at reviews, planning meetings and conferences;
- To help the foster carer to review and develop their practice;
- To provide information needed for court proceedings;
- To support an application for additional help for the child e.g. therapy;
- To reduce any risk to foster carers and their families while the child is placed

Foster carers may keep a diary for appointments and dates of activities.

There is an expectation that foster carers use the specific forms/ templates provided by the fostering service for weekly recording, notifying and keeping a log significant events and medication administered. Records provided in alternative formats will not be accepted.

Recording Guidelines:

When writing records, foster carers should consider the following basic guidelines:

- The language used should be simple and jargon free;
- The record should not be overly long but with sufficient information to be able to recall the event accurately;
- As a minimum, a weekly log is to be recorded for each child although in some circumstances more frequent recording may be recorded. This should be discussed with the supervising social worker
- Record facts rather than opinions. If personal opinions are recorded then make it clear that this is opinion and not fact;
- The record should be made as near to the time of the event as possible and signed and dated. If any information is changed or added later this should be clear from the record;
- Remember that the record may be shared with the child and/or birth family. They should be aware that records are being kept about them. It may be possible for them to contribute to the record or at least read it regularly. Where there is disagreement it is helpful to make a record of it.
- Respect the child's right to confidentiality by keeping records safe and secure
- Only share recorded information with the child (if age appropriate), the child's Social Worker or your Fostering Supervising Social Worker unless directed otherwise. If foster carers have any queries about what information and who it can be shared with, they should discuss with the Fostering Supervising Social Worker
- Once a child leaves placement, any records relating to that child should be given to the child's social worker to retain as part of the child's care record
- Refer to the Foster Carers Handbook for more detailed information on the range of policies/procedures mentioned in this guidance (e.g. Safe Care Planning etc.)

Foster carers must record on the standard templates shown below, which will be provided to foster carers

The service must ensure all foster carers record in a consistent manner and therefore, no other form of record will be accepted.

What to Record (not exhaustive):

- Weekly events. In some cases, events may need to be recorded more frequently and which should be discussed with the supervising social worker
- Decisions made by the carer in relation to delegated authority and other key decisions
- Improvements or achievements (includes observations/evidence relating to the 'Striving to be Thriving' framework)
- Date or times the child is away from the foster home
- Relevant Accidents or injuries (not a significant event)

- Requests for help/support
- Dates of meetings
- Medical appointments
- Contact with schools, social workers
- Contact with birth family
- Times when alternative carers used
- Items passed to adopters during introductions
- Details of any behaviour or comments from the child that give rise to concern, with a note of any actions taken. This may help to identify any triggers for such behaviour and what brings it to an end;
- Details of any theft or wilful damage caused by the foster child. This will be required for any claims;
- Anything else relevant to the child which it is felt a written record should be kept

Handwritten Records:

Foster carers can record by hand on the following templates, which will be provided to foster carers as a hard copy: -

<i>Weekly diary sheet</i>
<i>Significant incident/events form</i>
<i>Significant incident Log - (to help maintain a record of significant incidents relating to a child/young person and which may support the identification of patterns/themes.)</i>
<i>Record of medication administered</i>

Once a record has been written, foster carers must store the record(s) safely in their lockable box. The supervising social worker will obtain a copy of the recording by either: -

- photographing the recordings (if legible) and uploading them on to the foster carer record on LCS; or
- collecting the recordings at a visit and then uploading them onto the foster carers record on LCS. If the records are collected, the supervising social worker will then provide a copy of the record(s) at the next visit, which must be stored safely by the foster carer in a lockable box.

By having a copy of the record(s), foster carers are able to look back over previous recordings and check the progress the child/young person is making and also identify any themes/trends.

Supervising social workers will provide foster carers with hard copies of the templates.

Recording Electronically:

Foster carers can record electronically on the following templates, which will be provided to foster carers via e-mail:-

<i>Weekly diary sheet</i>
<i>Significant incident/events form</i>
<i>Significant incident Log - (to help maintain a record of significant incidents relating to a child/young person and which may support the identification of patterns/themes.)</i>
<i>Record of medication administered</i>

Foster carers who have a PC/Laptop/Tablet that has the functionality for a **secure pen drive** to be attached are able to record and store their records on the secure pen drive provided by the fostering service, which has the templates pre-loaded onto the pen drive. The completed records can either be: –

- e-mailed by the foster carer to the supervising social worker via egress who will upload them on to the foster carer record on LCS; or
- the supervising social worker can connect their laptop to the foster carers WiFi in the home, connect the secure pen drive to their laptop and upload the records straight onto the foster carers record on LCS

Foster carers who do not have this functionality but wish to record electronically, can do so using their existing device. Once the recording has been made, it can be provided to the supervising social worker in the following ways: -

- e-mailed to the supervising social worker securely using egress. The carer must however not store the record on their own device and must delete it once it has been e-mailed. Once received, the supervising social worker will upload the record(s) on to the foster carer record on LCS and provide the foster carer with a copy of the record(s) at the next visit, to be stored safely in the lockable box.
- If the foster carer has a printer, they may print the record off and store it in their lockable box. Again though, the record(s) must not be stored on their own personal device. The supervising social worker will either photograph the recordings (if legible) and upload them on to the foster carer record on LCS or alternatively, collect the recordings at a visit and then upload them onto the foster carers record on LCS. If the records are collected, the supervising social worker will then provide a copy of the record(s) at the next visit, which must be stored safely by the foster carer in a lockable box.
- alternatively, the supervising social worker may photograph the records at a visit (if legible) and upload them onto the foster carer record that way.

By having a copy of the record(s), foster carers are able to look back over previous recordings and check the progress the child/young person is making and also identify any themes/trends.

Procedure to be followed when there is a Significant Event:

Foster carers should make their supervising social worker and the child's social worker aware of the concern/incident at the earliest opportunity via a telephone call and as a minimum within 1 working day. Foster carers must also e-mail a

completed significant incident/event form to the child's social worker, supervising social worker and fostering duty (**FC.Support@sefton.gov.uk**). If the supervising social worker is not available, they must phone fostering duty and make them aware of the incident.

Informing the child's allocated social worker will ensure specific advice or support in relation to the child and their Care Plan and Placement Plan is considered.

The supervising social worker (if available) or fostering duty will bring the incident to the attention of the supervising social worker and team manager and ensure the incident is recorded on the foster carer record on LCS and added to the notifications spreadsheet held by the fostering service.

NOTE - in circumstances where a foster carer is not able to e-mail a completed significant incident/events form to the service at the time, the completed form must still be completed and provided to the supervising social worker and fostering duty at the earliest point afterwards.

The team manager will decide on the course of action to be taken and record a management decision/direction on the foster carer record and also the notifications spreadsheet held by the fostering service, highlighting the action to be taken. This enables scrutiny and oversight of all significant events/notifications by managers in the service, including identification of any patterns/themes.

The team manager will make a judgement on whether the fostering service manager needs to be immediately notified. The supervising social worker will keep the foster carer updated of the actions agreed.

Foster carers should keep a running log of significant incidents/events using the appropriate template, to assist in identifying themes/patterns/progress etc.

5. Storage of Records

Foster Carers should not store records on their own personal computer due to the complications of cleaning the computer of sensitive confidential information and potential access by unauthorised persons. Pen Drives will be provided to foster carers who have this functionality, with the recording templates pre-loaded for ease and will be password protected. Carers will have a folder for each child placed with them, on the secure pen drive. The recording templates will also be provided separately.

For those foster cares without this functionality, the guidance in Section 4 regarding recording and storing must be followed.

All new foster carers will be provided with a secure pen drive at their induction. Current foster carers without a secure pen drive can be provided with one. Foster carers must ensure that secure pen drives are kept safe and secure.

Where photographs are taken for Life Work using a digital camera, they should be stored on a secure CD/pen drive and subsequently handed to the child's social worker. Foster carers must not store these photographs on their own computer.

6. Recording and Supervision

It is important that foster carers regularly share their records relating to each child with their supervising social worker during the course of the placement. Supervising social workers should record that they have seen the records as part of their supervisory visits and can offer guidance in relation to recording. Foster carers' personal diaries do not need to be seen or signed.

Children and young people should be aware that foster carers have a responsibility to write down information about the day-to-day events of the placement and that they understand the reasons for this. This expectation should be shared with children in an age-appropriate way when they first enter a placement. With some events foster carers may want to consider whether it is appropriate for the young person to contribute to the recording. Issues such as this can be discussed with the supervising social worker.

Foster carer's recording is likely to reveal trends in the child's behaviour and development. Recordings may well highlight improvements and progress that has occurred and evidence improving outcomes.

If foster carers have any difficulties with reading and writing these should be discussed with their supervising social worker who will advise and provide additional support if necessary.

7. Medical Records

Foster carers will follow the procedures set out in the Administration of Medication Procedures. The RECORD OF MEDICATION ADMINISTERED template should be used.

8. Retaining/Returning the Information

On ceasing to be a foster carer the following arrangements apply:

- Any information that falls into the category of general fostering may be kept by the foster carer. However, care should be taken not to share information about other foster carers that may be contained in newsletters (e.g. addresses of carers running local support groups);
- Foster carers may keep any information that they have been given about themselves, apart from their identity badge. The foster carer's supervising social worker should retrieve this at the cessation of the fostering registration;
- Any information about a foster child held by the foster carers, whether it has been provided for them, or if they have made the record, must be returned to the fostering service once the placement has ended or if the foster carers cease to foster. The only exceptions to this are if the foster carers secure the child's placement with a **Child Arrangement Order**, Special Guardianship Order 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').

On the ending of any placement of a child the supervising social worker is responsible for retrieving any documentation relating to that child. The supervising social worker should check the lockable box in which this documentation is stored to ensure that all the information is retrieved and that information held on the secure pen drive is retrieved and also deleted. The social worker should ask the foster carer to sign the retrieval form, which should list all the documentation returned – see [Appendix 1: Foster Carer Records Retrieval Form](#).

The supervising social worker should ensure the information is safely stored.

Foster carers may request access at a later stage to anything that they have written that has been returned to the local authority. As such, on returning any information, foster carers may and should keep a record of:

- The name of the child in placement (first name and ID number only);
- Placement dates;
- What was included in the information (list of documents).

Foster carer files are kept for a minimum of 10 years after they cease to be foster carers.

Information kept on the Cared For child's case record must be kept until the 75th anniversary of their date of birth or 15 years from the date of death if a child who dies before the age of 18.

9. Foster Carers Understanding of this Policy

9.1 Assessment and Following Approval

Advice on recording is given to prospective carers during their preparation and assessment to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the requirement for record keeping and the implications for data protection, particularly with regard to understanding that the record belongs to the fostering service. It must be stressed to foster carers that they need to keep separate records for individual children and that it is not sufficient to keep a collective diary when fostering two or more children. Once a child's placement has ended, foster carers must be aware that any information relating to that child is returned to their supervising social worker.

Foster carers need to be aware of what must be recorded, how, and with whom it will be shared. Additionally foster carers should be familiar with any record formats that may be used both for the records that they receive and those which they are required to complete.

Following approval the recording aspect of the fostering task will be discussed on an ongoing basis during supervisory visits and at Foster Carer Annual Reviews. Foster carers should be made aware that they can contact their supervising social worker if they have any queries or concerns about recording.

[The Fostering Network](#) has published a booklet entitled *Record Keeping Information for Foster Carers*.

Appendix 1: Foster Carer Records Retrieval Form

I/ We..... (Foster carer's name/s)

have returned all of the care documentation that I/we held on

..... (Child's Name)

to

..... (Worker's Name)

The information that I/we have returned is:

I/ We have cleared all of the information held on our computer: Yes/No

Signed Dated

Foster Carer's Name

Signed Dated

Foster carer's Name

Signed Dated

Supervising Social Worker's Name.....

