



Nurture Fostering Foster Parents Handbook

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WELCOME TO NURTURE FOSTERING

The dictionary definition of the word Nurture: care for and protect someone while they are growing.

Our interpretation of this is that we will support the whole team caring for the child/children. Prioritising meeting and exceeding their expectations through the support and development of the people who care for them most.

We want the children we support to have similar opportunities in life as the children who are growing up with their own families.

We aim to achieve this by working together in the best interest of the children and therefore we should succeed in providing them with the best opportunities in the community.

Nurture Fostering Ltd is an independent fostering agency providing a range of services for Looked After Children with our primary aim being to give children the opportunity to achieve their full potential and to live fulfilling lives within the community.

Foster Care is the preferred option for the Local Authority when a child can no longer live with their family. The fostering service operates in accordance with all current legislation namely:

- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- National Minimum Standards
- Children's Act 1989
- Children & Young Persons Act 2011

This foster care handbook is intended to be both a source of information and a good practice guide for you in your fostering career. It should be of value also to Nurture Fostering supervising social workers who supervise and support you, and for all staff involved with and connected to Nurture Fostering. The handbook cannot cover every situation that you will encounter and it is not a substitute for a good working relationship between your supervising social worker, other staff and volunteers, and the parents and social worker for the child.

Each child or young person is an individual with a unique personality and can expect a response from all those who are caring for them that is tailored to their needs, but the foster care handbook is a guide for many aspects of day to day practice. It also covers the legal and social work framework and clarifies the policies and training opportunities available to you.

The Registered Manager of the agency is a qualified and registered social work Manager who has gained a great deal of experience of working with both children and adults through fostering and adoption. The registered manager will have a minimum of 10 years' experience working with a variety of organisations including: Local authorities and Private Limited Companies.

We believe in high standard of care for children and gaining better outcomes for them, but this can only be achieved through supporting, encouraging and working in partnership with our Foster Parents. The Registered Manager will ensure that all Foster Parents are fully supported and engaged in our supervision, training and support plans and to ensure that we are available to our Foster Parents 24 hours a day 365/6 days of the year.

This handbook works in connection with our online policies and procedures system, Tri.X, both should be read in order to provide you with the support and processes and procedures you will need.

THE FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS 2011

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 provides the legal framework within which all fostering service providers must work. This includes regulations governing the assessment and approval of parents and the placement of children in foster care.

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

Alongside the Fostering Services Regulations are the National Minimum Standards. These are 'minimum' standards rather than 'best possible' practice and are designed to ensure that all providers of fostering services are providing services that will safeguard children and lead to successful outcomes for them. The National Minimum Standards are used by Ofsted during inspections to measure how well fostering services are performing.

The Regulations and Standards can both be accessed via the legislation.gov.uk website at:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/pdfs/uksi_20110581_en.pdf

OFSTED

Every Fostering Service is regulated by Ofsted, this was introduced in 2007. Ofsted conduct inspections every three years on the fostering service. You may be asked to participate in these inspections, via an interview or possibly a visit to your home by Ofsted or asked to complete an online survey.

Given that Ofsted is the governing body if you feel concerned about any aspects of our fostering service, then you may wish to inform them. We would hope that your first point of contact would be to discuss the matter with us to ensure we can try and resolve any issues, but you can contact them on:

**Ofsted
Piccadilly
Gate Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 123 1231**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Nurture Fostering has a full statement of purpose which is available on our website www.nurturefostering.co.uk or can be found at the back of this document.

The full Statement of Purpose includes the following:

- Aims, Objectives and Principles
- Service Provision
- Organisational Structure
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Process for Recruiting Foster Parents
- Process for Supporting & Training Foster Parents
- Information on our Fostering Panel
- Meeting the Needs of Children
- Placement Types
- Foster Parents Handbook
- Additional Services
- Accessing our Complaints Policy

The following is a summary of the key service aims and objectives:

- To provide safe and appropriate foster care placements for children and young people
- To recruit, assess, train and support foster parents who have the necessary skills to support vulnerable children
- To meet and exceed the needs of the vulnerable children and improve the outcomes for children and young people
- A commitment to a child centered and inclusive approach
- To consider and respect the racial, cultural, religious and language background of the fostered child when matching.

A full Statement of Purpose should be made available to you during your assessment, if you do not receive a copy please ask your Supervising Social Worker or access the information from our website www.nurturefostering.co.uk.

CHILDREN'S GUIDE

Nurture Fostering have produced a number of age appropriate Children's Guides in line with National Minimum Standards. As Foster Parents, we ask that you support the child or young person to fill in the guide so that they are better informed and they can start on their new journey. The guides are available on our Tri.X site or via your supervising social worker.

Nurture Fostering also provide Foster Parents with a contact sheet for older children and young people. This is an opportunity for them to record all emergency contact information should they not return home when they should do. It is important that Foster Parents download the information and complete it as soon after placement commencement.

WHO'S INVOLVED IN MY LIFE AND THE LIFE OF A FOSTERED CHILD?

As a Foster Parent, you have your own social worker known as the Supervising Social Worker, but once you have a child in placement you will also be visited by the Children's Social Worker, their roles are defined as:

SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER:

- Will visit you monthly for supervision and support. Supervision will be more frequent when the placement is initially made. They are also required to check the child's bedroom monthly.
- Conduct regular Health and Safety visits
- Attend Planning Meetings
- Attend PEP Meetings
- Attend Regular Looked After Children's reviews
- Be available to support you either face to face or at the end of a phone 24/7 or virtually via Zoom, FaceTime or Microsoft Teams.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Child's Social Worker retains case responsibility at all times for any child placed.
- The Child's Social Worker must carry out regular visits to the placement:
 - When reasonably requested by the child
 - From time to time as circumstances required

In any event, within one week of the beginning of the placement, the Child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker will visit to conduct the placement agreement meeting, and then at intervals of not more than six weeks during the first year of placement and subsequently at intervals.

The Child's Social Worker should provide you with relevant information, advice and support to enable you to manage the placement successfully.

They should also keep you informed as to the progress of plans and consult you before there are any significant changes to agreed plans.

The Child's Social Worker should keep the Supervising Social Worker informed of plans and changes regarding the child and provide the Supervising Social Worker with any other relevant information.

THE FOSTER PARENT

1. Approval and Registration of Foster Parents

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FOSTERING PANEL

The following is included:

- The Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.
- The Panel provides a quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented to panel.
- Foster parents and prospective foster parents are given the opportunity to attend and be heard at all panel meetings at which their approval/review is being discussed and to bring a supporter to the panel if they wish.
- The Panel Chair ensures written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation.
- Prospective foster parents are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meet the child's developmental needs.

The Foster Care Agreement must have been fully discussed and explained during the assessment and preparation of foster parents prior to recommendation of approval by the Panel (except for temporary approval of a connected person) and prior to placement. The Fostering Panel has a responsibility to ensure that this has taken place.

Your approval as a Foster Parent was carried out following a recommendation of the Fostering Panel. This recommendation was then considered by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who made the final decision. Following your approval, reviews of your approval are undertaken on an annual basis and your first annual review is presented at the Fostering Panel for a decision to be made on you continuing to foster. Thereafter, reviews will continue to be undertaken on an annual basis and are presented at the Fostering Panel every two years. Following each review you will get a written confirmation on your continuing suitability to foster.

The terms of your registration will specify the numbers, ages and genders of children you are approved to foster. To assure continuing approval as a foster parent, you will be required to complete the mandatory core training courses which will be clarified by the Supervising Social Worker allocated to support you. Thereafter you will be expected to complete a minimum of 4 training courses a year and any other training identified by you and your social worker for the purpose of supporting the child in placement.

Fostering Limit

Under the 1989 Children Act, Schedule 7 - Standard 5.46 (Guidance and Regulations – Volume 4: Fostering) foster parents can only foster up to 3 children at any one time. This is known as the usual fostering limit. Normally, if anyone is looking after more than 3 children at one time they need to be treated as running a children’s home and registered as such. The one exception to this is if all the children placed with the foster parent are siblings for which there is no upper limit. However, it is always advisable to ensure that all children placed will be safely cared for and that foster parents will not be put under undue stress.

2. Foster Care Agreements

You will be asked to sign a Foster Care Agreement before you start fostering, which outlines the basic details of the fostering tasks and both your roles and responsibilities, and those of Nurture Fostering Ltd. It will also include your range of approval and any other specification or limitations the agency decision maker has made.

The Agreement will be signed by your Supervising Social Worker on behalf of the Fostering Service. The purpose of the Foster Care Agreement is to provide written information about general terms and conditions of the partnership between Nurture Fostering Ltd and foster parents.

The matters and obligations to be covered in the Foster Care Agreement are set out in Schedule 5 to the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and cover such issues as:

- Support and training, procedures for foster parents’ reviews
- Terms of approval
- Procedures for placement of children and the matters to be included in any placement plan.
- Arrangements for meeting any legal liabilities of the foster parents arising from, or by reason of a placement
- Procedures for foster parents to make complaints and representations, and
- Prohibition on corporal punishment

Foster parents are also obligated to give Nurture Fostering Ltd written notice of:

- Any intended change of address
- Any change in household composition
- Any change in personal circumstances, for example, the start of a new relationship or intention to have a long term relationship or other events which may affect their capacity to care for a child or young person and/or the suitability of the household, and
- Any request or application made by household members in connection with

fostering, adoption or childminding

These are regarded as the minimum requirements and Nurture Fostering, will ensure that foster parents have a full understanding of what is expected on behalf of both foster parents and Nurture Fostering when a child/young person is placed, and in relation to any other relevant policies, procedures and practice guidelines.

3. Placement Agreement

In line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2010): 9 - A Placement Agreement sets out how the placement will meet the child's needs. Schedule 2 sets out what should be included in the placement agreement such as:

- Contact arrangements
- Any order relating to the child by a court
- Arrangements for notifying any changes in contact arrangements
- Child's education and training needs
- Names and addresses of the child's medical and dental practitioners
- Where the child has an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), details of the Local Authority that maintains the plan.

The Placement Agreement should be prepared before the placement is made but where this is not reasonably practicable; the placement plan must be prepared within five working days of the start of the placement and it should be shared with the foster parent. Also, within five working days of the start of the placement, a placement agreement meeting should be convened with the following invited; Supervising Social Worker, Child Social Worker, Foster Parent and Looked After Child – depending on age.

THE ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT

Some newly approved foster parents have a child placed almost immediately while others have to wait a while. Although you will find it difficult not to become impatient and wonder why you are not being used, remember that Supervising Social Workers try very hard to find the most suitable foster parents possible for each individual child. In addition, although you may be experienced parents you will be inexperienced foster parents. It would not be fair for anybody to present you with a difficult situation the first time, so we will do our best to avoid putting you in that predicament!

While you are waiting, you will find it helpful to meet other foster parents at Nurture Fostering, attend recommended training, read relevant material on fostering, access Tri.X which will inform you of all relevant procedures and policies, access eCare our online software programme and talk to your family about how you receive a child into your home. Start to think about your expectations of a child sharing your home and what adjustments need to be made.

Specific Responsibilities and Tasks

The specific tasks and responsibilities of foster parents fall into three main categories:

- Caring for children
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment
- Working as part of a team

Caring for Children

- To provide day-to-day care for the children being looked after, with the understanding that children separated from their families have particular and different needs to those living at home.
- To actively participate in the implementation of the Child's Care Plan, which may include specific tasks, and facilitation of contact with parents and others who are important to the child.
- To promote the healthy physical and emotional growth and development of the child, with particular emphasis on encouraging a healthy lifestyle and a positive attitude towards education.
- To ensure that the children being looked after are encouraged to have a positive understanding of their culture, heritage and religion.
- To assist children in developing and sustaining positive relationships with their parents, relatives and other significant people.
- To set boundaries and manage children's behaviour with the use of appropriate praise and sanctions.
- To assist children in moving on to a new placement or rehabilitated home in a positive manner.
- To assist young people in learning independence skills, enabling them to maximize their chances of moving on successfully.
- To value diversity and work with children and their families in an anti-discriminatory way.

Providing a Safe, Secure and Caring Environment

- To ensure that children are kept safe from harm and abuse.
- To help children to learn how to keep themselves safe and who they can talk to should they feel unsafe or require advice and help.
- To promote the secure attachment of children to adults who are able to provide safe and effective care.
- To act as an advocate for children placed with them.
- To recognise the vulnerability to abuse and discrimination of particular groups of children e.g. disabled children and children from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Working as Part of a Team

- To work within Nurture Fostering guidelines, policies and procedures, accessed via Tri.X
- To play an active role as part of the team of Nurture Fostering staff and other professionals working with the children placed with them.
- To actively participate in all reviews, case conferences, personal education plan meetings (PEP/EHCA), and other relevant meetings
- To keep daily written records of placements and contribute to reports when required.
- To deal responsibly with confidential information and to adhere to Nurture Fostering's confidentiality policy.
- To actively promote positive communication between those working with the child, both professionals and the family of the child.
- To maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service.
- To evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) have been attained within 12 months of approval in line with Guidance and Regulations.
- To have an understanding of how personal experiences have affected their family and the impact that fostering is likely to have on them.
- To develop links within the community and the fostering service, to ensure that ongoing support is available.

Recording

Recording for Foster Parents and all involved in the care of a Looked After Child/young person has a number of important purposes including:

- Recording must be written daily and completed online via eCare, you will be provided with your own log in details and your SSW will check your logs daily and forward to the child's social worker daily.
- Maintaining a history for the child
- Provides continuity for the child when social workers are unavailable or changed
- Protects a foster parent from allegations
- Provides an opportunity to reflect on the placement and review practice
- Highlights a foster parent's training and development needs
- Underlines issues for the child
- Saves time and energy by providing a future reference for Foster Parents and staff
- Allows analysis of patterns of behaviour highlighting achievements and identifying problematic areas

Key issues and events to record

The following are the key issues and events you should consider recording:

- Day-to-day record
- Improvements and achievements of the child
- Any changes or concerns in behaviour or mood – including details of actual behaviour observed, what was happening before it started and your or other people's response to it
- Dates and times the child is away from your home – friends, school trips, holidays away with birth family, missing from care (*please see policy - Children Missing from Foster Care*)
- Specific incidents, events or changes in circumstances of family members
- Disagreements or complaints concerning any birth family members and how you dealt with them
- Accidents or injuries (even if slight) to the child
- Dates of meetings, attendance and decisions (sometimes these will be part of minutes sent out to you, if minutes are taken then you just need to record attendance).
- Any medical, dental and optician appointments and administration of any medicines/treatments/decisions from these – you need to inform the Child's Social Worker about statutory medical appointments and dental checks as s/he has to record this information on the Children Recording System record of the Looked After Child, this should be done via e-mail.
- Contact with school, child's social worker, birth family.
- Contact visits, child's responses before and after.
- Requests for help or assistance.
- Times when alternative care have been given, e.g. babysitters, with detail of who they were and what they did.
- Details of any damage or theft by the foster child.
- Involvement with police – reasons and outcome.
- Hospital attendance for A&E and planned out patient.
- CAMHS appointments and any involvement you had, how the child was before and after the appointment
- Medication frequency and dosage

You need to ensure you make the Child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker aware of the key events you are recording.

Over time, your recording should reveal trends and patterns in the child's behaviour and development. Your recording may well underline the improvements and progress that have occurred.

The strictest confidentiality of your recording should be maintained and any written material should be uploaded on eCare as soon as possible.

If you have difficulties with reading and writing please feel free to raise this with your Supervising Social Worker who will advise and provide you with additional support if necessary.

Separate record for each child

Further discussion can be had with your Supervising Social Worker on when and how you can email the documents in the folder.

Parent and child placement recording has to be particularly precise, as developmental changes in the child and any change in parental care has to be charted. Parent and Child placement records are part of an assessment, which a Children's Guardian from the court may wish to read and copy for use in a hearing. Though attendance at court is rare, Parent and Child foster cares need to be prepared for this and will receive support from the Child's Social Worker and their Supervising Social Worker to attend court.

Computer records

Electronic copies of key e-mails should be kept on the folder you maintain for each child in placement. If you hold children's information on a personal computer you should check with your Supervising Social Worker to ensure it conforms to the requirements of the Data Protection Act, and is kept confidential and access to information on the child is restricted to you. Once a child moves on, a copy is sent to your SSW and the document deleted from the computer. The computer folders must be secured with passwords at all times.

Key records to keep

The following are key documents and written information about the child placed which should be kept in a secure place:

- Background Information Record
- Placement Information Record
- Care Plan
- Special reports as appropriate such as educational and psychiatric
- Correspondence with the Child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker.
- Copy of LAC reviews.
- Specific work done by the foster child and yourself (this would usually belong to the child).
- Court Orders.
- Birth Certificate
- Passports
- Home Office documents

- Contact details – arrangements and correspondence and meeting minutes.
- Any important certificates, awards, school reports and photos.
- Health and safety – accident/injury records.
- Medical, dental and optical appointments and outcomes.
- Life story books do NOT need to be kept securely but should be available to children so that they can use them when they need to.

Seven tips for effective recording

Before you start be clear about why you are recording.

- Record as soon as possible after an event or observation.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon.
- Wherever possible stick to the facts.
- When you give an opinion separate it from the facts and explain why you have come to that particular opinion.
- Record in a way that you would be happy for the child or family to read what you have written.
- Completing regular summaries on younger children and with young people can be a good way of monitoring the child or young person's progress.

What happens to records when a child moves?

At the end of a placement your recording and other documents on the child have to be returned to the Child's Social Worker. You should keep a record of the child's name, date s/he arrived and left and of when the information was passed to Nurture Fostering in case you need to access it later.

Data Protection

Everyone working with Looked After Children and their families are involved in recording in different ways. Recording is an essential part of the service provided to children and families. It is important to understand its importance and that recording supports positive care of children.

Data Protection Act (1998)

The Data Protection Act regulates how personal information is used and protects individuals from misuse of personal details collected about them. It provides a common-sense set of rules which prohibit the misuse of personal information collected without stopping it being used for legitimate or beneficial purposes.

The details of the Data Protection Act are quite complex, but at the heart of it are eight common-sense rules known as the Data Protection Principles. These require personal information kept to be:

1. fairly and lawfully processed
2. processed for limited purposes
3. adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. accurate
5. not kept longer than necessary
6. processed in accordance with an individual's rights
7. kept secure
8. Not transferred abroad without adequate protection.

The Act provides stronger protection for sensitive information about individuals, such as health details.

The Act, with some exceptions, gives individuals the right to find out what information is held about them by organisations.

During your fostering career we will need to share your personal data with a variety of different outside agencies for example:

- Local Authority Fostering and associated teams as required.
- Ofsted
- The Fostering Network
- Social Workers
- Health & Social eCare Solutions
- Our appointed Medical Advisor
- Fostering Panel Members
- Nurture Fostering's Agency Decision Maker

The information shared could include your Foster Parent profile, fostering assessment (form f) and any information that you have given or we have received during your assessment process. This will only be for the purpose of fostering and we will not share your data with a third party for any other reason.

You will be asked to sign a disclosure to give Nurture Fostering Ltd your consent to share your data and information as detailed above with consideration that other regulations and laws may permit the sharing of information.

REVIEW OF FOSTER PARENTS

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 requires foster parents to be reviewed every year. The reviews of foster parents' approval are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy itself about their carers ongoing suitability to foster. The review considers your suitability to continue to foster and whether your approval terms remain the same. A review can also be held if there is a change in your circumstances, a complaint has been made against you, or there is concern about the standard of care you are providing.

Reviews will normally be carried out in your home and it is a two way process between you and your SSW, where you will have the opportunity to express your views about the child, the Fostering Service and the support you are receiving. The child's Social Worker, child or young person being fostered (currently or previously) that has been provided. In addition, if the child in placement is involved with any other services for instance CAMHS, feedback will be required.

In accordance with the fostering regulations, foster parents are required to have a medical every year, or if they have any health issues, a medical may be requested more often. A Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check will be carried out at least every three years for everyone in the household who is over 18 years of age. Back up parents and regular visitors (support parents) and babysitters who have unsupervised contact with children placed in your care (Looked After Children) must also have a DBS check at least every three years.

The first annual review is presented at the Fostering Panel but other reviews may not need to go to the fostering panel unless:

- There has been a major change to your terms of approval or in the circumstances of a member of your household
- There has been a significant complaint against you, the parent, the Registered Manager, must decide, in consultation with the Supervising Social Worker, if the complaint is significant but this should normally be taken to include all child protection investigations
- If it is proposed to terminate your approval as a Foster Parent.
- If a significant change to your approval is being recommended.
- If there has been a Standards of Care investigation, the outcome of which necessitates a change in your approval.

You will be notified of the outcome in writing and you can have access to the Panel Minutes. You will need to sign a new agreement following any changes to your approval.

It is an expectation that all parents must inform the Fostering Service of any significant changes in their household, including people joining and leaving the family home. You are reminded that if a new partner is to join the household, this must not take place until a DBS check has been carried out and an assessment to include your partner has taken place with your Supervising Social Worker.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSESSMENTS

Statutory Framework

Nurture Fostering are required by Regulation 26 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 to obtain a range of information before considering whether an applicant is suitable to act as a foster parent and that their household is suitable for any child in respect of which approval may be given. This includes details of the applicant's accommodation.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services requires that the foster home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated, is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and is in good order throughout. Outdoor spaces which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained (Standard 10.2).

Standard 10.5 requires that the foster home is inspected annually, without appointment (**unannounced visit**) by Nurture Fostering to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children.

The Supervising Social Worker would during your assessment, ascertain if your accommodation is suitable to enable you to provide safe and stimulating care. In reaching such a decision, a number of factors would have been taken into account, not least the age, gender and numbers of children proposed to be fostered.

The Supervising Social Worker will gather evidence to satisfy the Fostering Panel that the foster parent has an ability to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.

TERMINATION OF APPROVAL

An approved foster parent can resign at any time by writing a letter to the Fostering Service giving 28 days' notice. You do not have to give an explanation for resigning but if you have a child in placement there is an expectation that you will not resign until arrangements have been made for an alternative care arrangement. A foster parent is no longer approved from 28 days after the Fostering Service has received a letter of resignation.

In some cases, there may be serious concerns regarding the standard of care a foster parent is providing, or as a result of an investigation carried out following an allegation or complaint, a report may be submitted to the Fostering Panel, recommending termination of approval.

In some cases the Fostering Panel's recommendation or decision by the Agency Decision Maker may be to terminate your approval. The issues involved in this should not come as a surprise as your Supervising Social Worker would have discussed them with you beforehand. You have a right to attend the Panel, and will be invited to do so. You may also wish to record your views in writing for the Panel to read and consider.

Usually the Panel will let you know their recommendation immediately. Where this is not possible you will be contacted as soon as possible with the outcome. If you choose not to attend, your Supervising Social Worker will let you know the outcome. You will also be

notified in writing of the Agency Decision Maker's decision within 7 to 28 days of panel. If a foster parent does not agree with the decision, they have 28 days to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Foster parents will be provided with information on how to make an appeal and what support is available to them.

SUPPORT

Supervising Social Workers

All approved foster parents will be supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker, known as the Supervising Social Worker (SSW). The primary role of the Supervising Social Worker is to ensure that you have access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice, to enable you to provide consistent, high quality care for any child placed in your home. It is the duty of the Supervising Social Worker to ensure that each foster parent he or she supervises is informed in writing of, and accepts, understands and operates within, all Regulations and Standards and policies and guidance agreed by the fostering service.

How this is achieved will vary from foster parent to foster parent depending on their individual needs, but in all cases the Supervising Social Worker will:

- Complete a Foster Parent Agreement and Foster Care Supervision Agreement
- Ensure that you have received your approval letter, are informed in writing of, accept, understand and agree to operate within all standards, policies and guidance agreed by the fostering service
- Ensure that you know how to access the Foster Parent Handbook and Children's Guides available on Tri.X
- Carry out an annual review of your registration as a foster parent
- Identify, in partnership with you, training needs and identify how these will be met
- Ensure that your personnel training plans are put in place
- Ensure that you receive the necessary training and support to complete the 7 standards of the Training, Support, and Development Standards (TSD).
- Ensure that you produce and maintain safe caring guidelines for your household per each child placed
- Ensure that any complaint by or against you is investigated in accordance with the relevant complaints' procedure.
- Ensure that lines of communication between you and the Child's Social Worker are open and effective
- Maintain regular and effective communication with the Child's Social Worker and update Nurture including CC'ing them in to the emails:
 - Notifying the Child's Social Worker of any change in your circumstances
 - Notifying the Child's Social Worker of any further placements with you
 - Notifying the Child's Social Worker of any issues relating to the child arising during the Supervising Social Worker's contact with you
- Provide you with assistance in dealing with other relevant services such as health

and education

- Respond promptly to telephone calls and correspondence from you
- Visit and otherwise maintain contact with you in accordance with the time frame outlined below
- Ensure that the specific support needs of your own children are monitored on a regular basis both during supervisory visits and specifically at the time of the review of your registration as a foster parent, when the views of your own children will be sought and considered supervising Social Workers share with the Child's Social Worker the responsibility of safeguarding the child and should also be aware of the duty to respond to the needs of the child or parent, especially where they have concerns about the child's safety or well-being. Your Supervising Social Worker is also expected to know about the Child's Care Plan. Nurture Fostering's Supervising Social Worker, also support the foster parents to play an active role in agreeing the contents of each child's placement plan in conjunction with the Child's Social Worker.

In summary, Supervising Social Workers are responsible for supervising and supporting you in respect of your general role as a Foster Parent rather than in respect of specific placements.

Visits by Supervising Social Workers

Supervising Social Workers will meet with you on a regular basis. Each meeting should have a clear purpose and provide an opportunity to supervise your work as well as provide you with support.

In addition to the pattern of visiting outlined below, Supervising Social Workers will always visit when reasonably requested by you.

Visits will take place at least as frequently as:

- When a child is in placement, weekly to begin with and as the child becomes settled fortnightly and then monthly with telephone contact in between visits.
- When there is no child in placement but you are available, at least every six weeks with telephone contact frequently.
- When there are Child Protection concerns about the child in placement or there are issues that threaten to disrupt a current placement, visits should be every fortnight or every week when required.

Unannounced Visits

Supervising Social Workers are required to undertake a minimum of two unannounced visits annually in compliance with Guidance and Regulations.

The main purpose of the visit will be to look at the home environment that a child is living in. Nurture Fostering recognises that our parents provide a high quality of care but we are constantly striving to ensure that children are safe in foster care, and unannounced visits are some of the mechanisms available to ensure this.

Supervising Social Workers will ask to see the foster child's bedroom and communal areas available to the child such as the bathroom, kitchen and living rooms. In addition, SSW are required to have access to all rooms and the entire home to undertake health and safety assessments. The visit will be carried out by your Supervising Social Worker who will already be aware of the general standard of your home.

Supervising Social Workers will also need to check:

- Who is in the home.
- Who is looking after the child.
- If you are not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the foster child.
- Regular visitors.

The Supervising Social Worker will need to talk to any foster children in placement that are home at the time of the visit.

If the child in placement is being looked after by someone other than the Foster Parent, or back up foster parent, the Supervising Social Worker should seek to identify that person. In this situation, the Supervising Social Worker should see the child and ensure their safety. The situation should be discussed with the Registered Manager and you as a matter of urgency. If you are not at home, the Supervising Social Worker will inform you that they have undertaken the visit.

Record of visits

Supervising Social Workers will draw up a record of every visit which will be shared with you. A copy will be kept on your electronic record.

Supervising Social Workers will be expected to record:

- Details of who was present
- Details of children currently in placement and issues arising from their placement
- Any changes to your household
- Health and safety issues
- Review of training needs
- Details of any unauthorised absences of children from the household since the last visit
- Details of the use of sanctions or control since the last visit
- Details of any accidents to foster children since the last visit
- Details of any school exclusions or unauthorised absences since the last visit
- Any other matter that may be specific to you and your needs arising from you fostering tasks.

TRAINING

Fostering is becoming an ever more complex task and although many of the skills you utilise in caring for children cannot be taught, there are always new skills and learning to be acquired and all parents are expected to complete a core training programme. Where there are two parents in a household, both are expected to attend such mandatory training or complete the training online.

Mandatory training topics are: -

- Skills to Foster
- Introduction to Nurture Fostering
- First Aid
- Safer Caring - Household Members and Adult Carer Givers
- Dealing with allegations
- Keeping Good Records
- TSDs (Training, Support and Development Standards)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection, Level 2
- Parent and Child Placements
- Child Sexual Exploitation, Level 2
- Sexual Abuse and Recognising Grooming

We will also expect you to undertake further training and development as identified in discussion with your SSW or during your annual review of registration.

All parents are expected to maintain an individual training profile. This should include details of training and development undertaken and future training needs. Your Supervising Social Worker will help you produce and maintain this during their regular supervisory visits.

We will ensure that you are notified of available training and development opportunities on a regular basis. We will also ensure that all mandatory training is accessible to all parents and endeavor to ensure that all other training and development activity is accessible to all parents.

RESPITE CARE

To support you in your role as a foster parent, Nurture Fostering offers periods of paid respite up to 21 days in the calendar year subject to terms and conditions.

Respite care is required in a number of different circumstances for example, a full time foster parent may need a holiday or they may have urgent family commitments meaning they need to travel overseas. Sometimes where a fostering placement is particularly challenging, Nurture Fostering in conjunction with the Child's Social Worker may arrange for a short break from the placement.

What is involved in respite care?

Respite care involves working closely with the full time foster parent who is usually responsible for the child. It is also important to reassure a child that the respite placement will only be for a short time period and that they will be able to return to their usual home afterwards. This can often be a stressful period for a foster child who may already be feeling the effects of previously disruptive changes.

What are the benefits of respite care?

Respite care is important to the well-being of many foster families by:

- Providing support to long term foster parents.
- Allow foster parents to enrich the lives of children or young people on a short term basis.
- Have an impact on a child and a foster parent's quality of life and by giving the respite foster parent the chance to make a real difference in the lives of both parties.

Arrangements for respite is sometimes also agreed as part of the child's care plan.

Terms and Conditions of Respite

It is important to reassure a child that the respite placement will only be for a short time period of time and that they will be able to return to their home with you afterwards.

The following terms and conditions apply to all respite requests and arrangements:

- We will use our best endeavours to provide a respite placement subject to the carers that we have available or whereby a suitable person has been identified within your support network and they have been assessed by the agency.
- Please note that during busy periods for respite requests such as school holidays, we may not be able to offer respite for everyone that requests it.
- Please do not book a holiday or make arrangements until such time that you have received written confirmation from the agency that your respite request has been arranged and authorised.
- The respite period will run on a calendar year from January to December, where you have been approved by the agency midway through the year this period will still end on 31st December.

- Respite can only be requested after a minimum of three months from the placement start date that you are requesting respite for has elapsed.
- The maximum amount of respite that can be taken within any three month period is fourteen days.
- For avoidance of doubt; should you take fourteen days respite in December you will not be able to take respite again until March/April of the following year.
- Any “unused respite” cannot be carried over into the following calendar year.
- To qualify for respite you will be required, as a minimum to be able offer as much respite as you have requested/taken subject to your approval. For example; should you wish to take seven nights respite, we have the expectation that you will reciprocate by offering respite for other child(ren) placed with our other foster carers within your approval for the same period of time as a minimum.
- In order to request respite and prior to the respite start date, you will need to provide a minimum of eight weeks written notice to your supervising social worker.
- Whilst you are taking respite your weekly allowance for each child in respite placement will be reduced to 70% of your usual weekly allowance.
- The maximum allowance available for providing a respite placement to another Nurture Fostering foster parent is £400.00 per week pro-rata per night.
- There will be no allowance available for any respite agreed after your 21 days entitlement has been used for that calendar year.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Nurture Fostering believes that support groups can make a valuable contribution to the range of support services available for parents. The Nurture Foster Care Association (NFCA) currently runs support groups for all foster parents. It is an expectation that foster parents should attend these groups so as to share experiences, and also as another source of support. They are organized monthly and the expectation is that a minimum of 8x are attended annually.

THE FOSTERING NETWORK

Now you are approved you automatically become members of the Fostering Network, this will allow you to access information on their website, should any allegations be made they are able to offer you individual support.

FINANCE

Nurture Fostering has a set of allowances available to all foster parents. At the point of accepting the referral this will be confirmed to you.

Parent & Child Allowances:

Parent/s:

Most parents are in receipt of universal credit and should be budgeting to purchase their own food and should be encouraged to prepare and cook food for themselves. We ask all of our foster parents that

they support and assist parents with budgeting skills. The following is a schedule of allowances for the baby or child. For every baby or child in placements provisions need to be made for each baby or child.

Allowance Type	Value
Savings	£10 per week – This will be retained by the agency/Local Authority
Pocket Money aged 0-4	£3.00 per week
Activity Money	£10.00 per week
Clothing	£10.00 per week
Food and nappies	£10.00 per week

Should the parent chose to provide clothing, food, nappies and activities for the child themselves, then this money should be saved until the end of the placement and provided directly to the parent if they return home with the child. If the parent and child are to be separated then the money should be returned to Nurture Fostering whereby it will be added to the savings and provided to the Local Authority. Please ensure that if you provide the money to the parent on a weekly basis that they sign for the money/

Child and young person’s allowances:

Children and young people are eligible to be provided with the following allowances on a weekly basis. If the money is not to be used weekly, then you will need to open either a bank account or a savings account for the young person and place the money in there. This could include: If they wanted to save for something special, for example an expensive pair of trainers or a new phone.

Allowance Type	Value
Savings This will be retained by the agency or Local Authority	£10.00 per week £12.00 for young people aged 16+
Clothing Allowance	£20.00 per week
Activities	£15.00 per week
Pocket Money	Age: 5-10 - £6.00 per week 11-15 £10.00 per week 16+ - £12.00 per week
Food & School Meals	The foster carer is expected to either provide a packed lunch or pay for school meals for the child/young person in their care.

Prior to giving the child or young person cash, please ensure that they have signed the correct form in your file to state that they have received the money.

Benefits

You are not entitled to claim state benefits and allowances for fostered children such as Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

Any taxable ‘profit’ you make from fostering (on which you pay income tax) will be taken into account for any Child Tax Credit you may be entitled to in respect of your own children and in calculating Working Tax Credit entitlement.

INSURANCE

It is your responsibility to advise your household and car insurers that you are fostering. Premiums are not usually affected and most household content policies include accidental damage.

We strongly advise you to ensure that you have adequate insurance in place, in particular for accidental damage.

If you are using your car to transport foster children you must have a fully comprehensive insurance cover.

THE NEED FOR A PLACEMENT

Before you are approached about a potential placement there will usually have been several layers of planning and decision making.

As a minimum, the Child's Social Worker would have discussed the need for the child to be looked after with their manager. This may have arisen for a number of reasons:

- The child's parents have requested that the child be accommodated (looked after on a voluntary basis).
- Children's Services have decided to take action to safeguard the child – usually by way of a legal order.
- The Police and/or Children's Services have taken emergency action to protect a child.
- A Youth Court has decided that a young person should be remanded to Local Authority accommodation.
- A young person (most often an unaccompanied asylum seeker) has presented themselves for accommodation.

The Child's Social Worker will need the approval of an appropriate senior manager before they approach the Placements Officer who will seek the most appropriate placement from an independent fostering agency.

MATCHING

When seeking a placement, the needs of the child and the particular skills and expertise of individual foster parents and how these can meet those needs, will be taken into consideration.

The National Minimum Standards requires each child to have access to fostering services that recognise and address their needs in terms of:

- Gender
- Religion

- Ethnic origin
- Language
- Culture
- Disability
- Sexuality
- Education
- Family & Friends
- Activities
- Needs that will promote and safeguard the welfare of the child.

Depending on the needs of the child, many other factors may need to be taken into consideration; in particular the child's schooling. In reality many of the placements we make are unplanned and while we do our best to meet matching criteria, we cannot always guarantee that we will fully achieve them at all time.

Exemptions

It may sometimes be necessary to ask you to consider taking a placement outside of your normal range of approval. This might for example mean asking you to take placements over your approval numbers in order to keep a sibling group together. This must be agreed by a senior manager and if the placement is to last for more than 6 days, thereafter you will need to have a Foster Parent Review undertaken to consider a change of approval, and this can be presented to the Agency Decision Maker for approval.

Placements Made Out of Office Hours

Placements sometimes need to be made outside of office hours and if you have indicated that you would like to be considered for this you may receive a call from our Out of Hours Social Workers. You will be expected to keep the child at least until the next working day in order for plans for the child to be made. In the case of a long bank holiday weekend, such as Easter, it may be 3 or 4 days before new arrangements can be made. However, if you have a vacancy then after consideration of matching criteria with your SSW, you may be asked to keep the child for a longer period.

ACCEPTING OR REJECTING A PLACEMENT REQUEST

The final decision about accepting a placement rests with you. While the social worker who contacts you may feel that you are the best available Foster Parent for the child, you need to be satisfied that you are happy to go ahead and the social worker should provide you with the information you need to make this decision. You will be given an outline of the expectations, and we will need to have a decision from you within 30 minutes in order that we can submit your Assessment for consideration to the Local Authority. When we receive the referral so do 80+ other fostering agencies. It is important we inform the local authorities of you as soon as possible.

The following are some of the things that the duty social worker will inform you about:

- The child's name
- The child's partial date of birth
- The child's gender
- Why the child needs to be looked after
- The child's race, cultural background and religion
- The child's language
- The child's home address.
- Details of the child's family and other significant figures in the child's life
- Whether the child has been looked after before
- How long the placement is expected to last
- Whether the child is to be accommodated or subject to a court order
- Whether the child is subject to a child protection plan.
- Whether the child is known to have been abused
- What contact arrangements are expected
- What school the child attends and whether s/he will be expected to continue to attend the same school

- The child's health history, including details of any medical conditions, medication allergies or special dietary requirements
- Any clubs or activities that the child attends
- Any specific behavioural issues which may be of concern
- Offending history (if any)

While information may be scarce if the child is placed in an emergency or out of hours, in most cases it is reasonable to expect the social worker to be able to provide you with most of the above information.

You will need to consider the implications of the information available for your own family as well as for any other foster children in placement with you. You will also need to consider whether you are confident that you are able to meet the child's needs. If you feel you need more information or you have reservations about taking the child then you should tell the social worker rather than agree to a placement that you are unsure about.

Preparing for a Placement

While you will need to prepare household guidelines in advance of the experience of a placement, you will also need to consider these afresh in advance of each individual placement.

Some of the issues you will need to consider are:

- How will you explain to the child what is expected of them and other household members?
- Do you have all the information you need to care for the child safely?
- Is the child known to have been abused?
- Do the particular needs of the child mean that the usual household guidelines need to be revised?
- If so is this achievable and acceptable to all other members of the household?
- What are the most important household rules that must be adhered to and which are less significant?
- How will unacceptable behaviour be dealt with, whoever displays it?

CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS

Research shows that it is beneficial and desirable for most children to continue to have regular contact with their parents, relatives and friends. Positive, regular contact will help a child to settle in placement, especially when the child sees the Foster Parent promotes and respects this contact. Where a child is to be permanently placed, contact can have benefits to a child such as promoting a child's identity and keeping alive options for relationships later on in their life.

Contact is a key part of the fostering role and can be very different for each placement and thus be very time consuming to the Foster Parent. Some form of contact is expected for most placements and you will have a significant role to play in this. You will therefore need to discuss the proposed arrangements with the placements officer at Nurture and consider these in the light of your own circumstances.

Questions you should consider include:

- What sort of contact is required – face to face, letters or telephone calls?
- Who is the child to have contact with and what is the purpose of this contact?
- Where is contact to take place?
- How often will it take place and for how long?
- If contact is to take place in your home do you have the physical space and what are the implications for other members of your household?
- Please note that you will be expected to transport the child to and from contact
- Will a social worker be present at contact?
- Will you be expected to supervise contact?
- Has a court made particular stipulations regarding contact?
- If there is a history of difficulties with the parent, for instance alcohol, drug abuse or aggression. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

PLANNING AND INFORMATION SHARING

A pre-admission planning meeting should be arranged by the SSW and CSW unless:

- It is an emergency placement
- You were invited to the Placement Information Meeting and detailed arrangements were made there.

The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that all concerned are fully briefed about the child and that arrangements are made for the child's transition from home to the placement.

Information about the Child and Her/ His Family

You should be given copies of the following forms:

- Medical Consent Form
- Foster Placement Agreement Form
- Child/Young Person's Care Plan
- Placement Information Record

If there is a Care Order, Interim Care Order or Emergency Protection Order, you need a copy of this to evidence that the child is looked after and that you are caring for the child on behalf of the Local Authority.

If the child's placement with you is planned, the above forms should be given to you before the child is placed.

If the child is placed in an emergency, the Medical Consent Form and Placement Information Record and Agreement must be completed as far as possible (and a copy provided to you) before the child is left with you. The Care Plan must be provided as soon as this is available.

If any of the above is not given to you then you should remind the social worker that it is their responsibility to provide you with a copy.

Placement Planning Meeting

A Placement Planning Meeting will be held within one week of the placement. The meeting should take place at the placement. The delegated authority should also form part of this meeting and both the SSW and CSW should be able to come to some agreement at the early stage of the placement although subject to later review.

This should be attended (if possible), by:

- The child
- The child's parent(s) and/or previous Foster Parents
- The Child's Social Worker
- The Supervising Social Worker
- The Foster Parent

The purpose of this meeting is to consider what the aims of the placement are, how this fits with the Child's Care Plan and who will be undertaking specific tasks. This will also be an opportunity for you to clarify what is being expected of you and confirm the extent to which the day to day care of the child and decision making have been delegated to you through Delegated Authority which should be completed during the Placement Agreement Meeting.

LOOKED AFTER CHILD (LAC) REVIEWS

Every child who is looked after must have a Looked After Child statutory review. The first review must be held within 28 days of the child becoming looked after. The second review must be held within the next 3 months and subsequent reviews must be held within 6 months of the previous review.

All Reviews are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and attended by some or all of the following:

- The child
- The child's parents
- The Child's Social Worker and their manager
- The foster parent and their Supervising Social Worker
- A staff member from the child's school
- The Independent Visitor
- The child's advocate
- Others who are playing a significant role in the child's life (e.g. Therapists, Health Visitor or any other professional).

The review will usually be held in your home (depending on the circumstances and time), therefore it is important that this is done at a time that is convenient for you, and fits in with the needs of other members of your household such as your own and other fostered children. On occasions the review may be held at other venues such as the school or Local Authority office.

The review will consider all aspects of the child's life including their health, education, and contact with family and how their placement is progressing. Both you and the child will both be asked to complete a Consultation Paper which can be used to record your views about how well the plans are going and what needs to happen over the coming weeks and months.

The Supervising Social Worker is expected to attend all reviews to support the foster parent as important decisions about the placement will be made at the review. After the review, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will produce written minutes of the review normally within 2 weeks of the review. The Supervising Social Worker should obtain copies of the minutes and ensure the foster parent has a copy. If necessary, the Care Plan will be revised and there may also be a need to revise the Placement Agreement.

SETTLING THE CHILD INTO YOUR HOME

Whenever and however a child comes to you, the settling-in process is likely to be stressful for the child and their family, as well as you and your family. As you gain in experience, you will discover a variety of different techniques that work for you and can be applied according to the needs of different children.

You will need to go at the child's pace, but some of the things you might consider to help them feel comfortable include:

- Show them around your house and garden – it might help to ask any other children in placement or your own children to do this.
- Show them where their bedroom is and where they can keep their belongings.
- Show them where your toys are and make sure they know which of your possessions they can use and which they cannot.
- Make sure they know who everyone else is in your household and what they should call them.
- Explain the rules of the house.
- Ask them about their likes and dislikes, especially what they like to eat and what they dislike the most.

Many things will be different for the child when they walk through the doors of your house for the first time. Some of these differences will be exciting and welcomed but others will be a further cause of anxiety for the child alongside what is already a stressful time. Differences may include the size of your house, the number of people who live with you; that you have pets and the child has never had pets and just the general way in which your family lives from day to day. Attention to the following issues will help the child cope with these differences without losing their own identity:

- What was their lunch box like?
- Would they like a similar or different one?
- Are they used to doing jobs around the house; would they like to help and if so what do they think they would be good at?
- Are they used to having pocket money; are they used to having a regular magazine or comic?
- Do they have any pets; or do they like animals?
- Are they used to playing with other children; where did they play – at home or at friend's houses?
- Do they have a comfort toy or object? What is it called? You may need to resist the temptation to wash soft toys or comfort blankets. Smells are particularly important to children and they may not want their comforters or soft toys to be washed.
- What sort of clothes does the child like to wear? If the child is old enough, let them help you choose what they wear and what clothes to buy. Do not throw away clothes they have brought with them. Try to let the child wear as many of these clothes as they wish, especially in the early days.

- Do not cut the child's hair or otherwise change their appearance without first discussing this with their parents and seeking their written agreement in consultation with the child social worker. Remember that for some children there are religious restrictions on cutting hair and styles of dress and appearances
- Be particularly sensitive with regards to bathing and sleeping. A child may be uncomfortable undressing in front of you and these times of day may cause particular distress for children who have been sexually abused.
- School - enable them to go to the same school if at all possible, and discuss any difficulties in doing so with the Child's Social Worker.

Many children are resilient and will cope well with the move to your house. For others, however sensitive you are during these early days, there may be an unwelcome reaction which may include:

- Rejection of you and your family
- Challenging your authority
- Aggression to you, other children or themselves
- Constant attention seeking
- Withdrawal or distancing themselves
- Bedwetting
- Disturbed sleep patterns and/or nightmares
- School refusal
- Imagined (fabricated) or real illness

Given time, patience and your skills as a Foster Parent, these difficulties will ease. Do not expect this to happen overnight. You will need to keep talking to the child and allow them to express their feelings, even negative ones. Make sure that you talk to others, especially your Supervising Social Worker. There will be times that you feel you are coping with the weight of all these problems on your own but you are not. As a foster parent you are part of a team and by working together we can overcome these difficult periods and make a positive difference in the life of the child.

WORKING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

During your career as a Foster Parent, you will come across many different types of professionals who work with the children you are caring for. Some of these you will be familiar with, such as GPs, Teachers and Health Visitors. There are others that you are unlikely to have come across before.

Children's Guardians

A Children's Guardian is an independent court appointed social worker who looks after the interests of children subject to Court proceedings, such as the Local Authority applying for a Care Order. They are appointed by and report to the Court. Their job is to advise the Court as to what they think is in the best interest of the child.

They will:

- Listen to what the child wants.
- Talk to everyone who is important to the child such as their parents and grandparents.
- Talk to Health Visitors, Teachers, Social Workers and anyone else with relevant information.
- Read all the paperwork that we have relating to the child and their family.
- Work out what they think is best for the child.
- Make recommendations to the Court.

It is probable that as part of this process they will want to talk to you to find out how the child is progressing and possibly to seek your views over issues such as your observation of how contact between the child and their parents has been.

Children's Guardians have considerable influence on the final outcome of any Court hearing.

Out of Hours Team

As family problems do not always arise during office hours, Nurture Fostering has an out of office service. We are on call overnight and at weekends. The Team should be your first port of call outside of office hours if there is a major problem relating to a child in your care for example a child going missing.

Out of hours contact number: 0208 690 9012

Police

While we are all aware of the role of the Police, many of us will go through our lives with no direct contact with a Police Officer. As a Foster Parent, there may be times when you need to contact the Police and you should not be afraid to do so should the need arise. In most instances where police involvement is necessary, (a missing child for example) there will be time to talk to the out of office service, first to agree that the Police do need to be contacted and also agree about who will do this. However, in an emergency and especially where someone is at physical risk of harm, you should not delay in contacting the Police immediately.

You will need to advise the Police that the child is looked after and what their legal status is (i.e. are they on a Care Order or are they accommodated)? If the child is subject to a legal order such as a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order, the Police may need to see a copy of the order. They will also need other information such as the child's home address and details of who has parental responsibility so you should always try to keep relevant details, including a photo of the child close to hand.

Appropriate Adult

If a young person is to be questioned at a police station, they must be accompanied by an appropriate adult who must observe the interview and should ensure that the interview is carried out fairly, advising the young person as necessary and facilitating communication between the Police and the young person.

Parental Responsibility

The Children Act 1989 defines parental responsibility as, 'all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law, a parent of a child has, in relation to the child and her/his property'.

Where a child's father and mother were married to each other at the time of her/his birth, they shall each have parental responsibility for the child or if the father is named on the birth certificate, and the child is born on or after 1st December 2003.

Where a child's father and mother were not married to each other at the time of her/his birth:

- The mother shall have parental responsibility for the child
- The father shall not have parental responsibility for the child, unless he acquires it in accordance with the provisions of the Act

A father can acquire parental responsibility if:

- He becomes registered on the birth certificate as the child's father.
- He and the child's mother enter into a parental responsibility agreement providing for him to have parental responsibility for the child.
- A court order that he shall have parental responsibility for the child.

Legal Status of the Child

It is important that you know the legal status of any child placed with you and understand the implications of this legal status for all involved.

All children will be “looked after” by the Local Authority. This term is used to cover all children regardless of their legal status.

Full Care Order (Section 31 of the Children’s Act 1989)

The Local Authority can seek a full care order, under Section 31 of the Children’s Act 1989. This means that the Local Authority holds much more responsibility and the parent loses most of their rights to make decisions for the child. The Local Authority have parental responsibility for the child and have the power to determine the extent to which a parent or guardian of the child may meet their parental responsibility for them. In addition, the Local Authority can make decisions as to where the child will live and with whom and how the child will have contact with named people.

Accommodation (Section 20 of the Children’s Act 1989)

Accommodation is a purely voluntary arrangement under which the Local Authority is asked by someone with parental responsibility, to care for the child.

The Local Authority does not acquire parental responsibility. However, anyone who does not have parental responsibility for a child but does have actual care of her/him may do what is reasonable in the circumstances to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (s3 (5) Children Act 1989).

ATTENDING TO A CHILD'S HEALTH NEEDS

The Importance of Promoting Children's Development and Health

Standards & Regulations

- Standard 6 – Promoting Good Health and Wellbeing
- Standard 5 – Understand the development of children and young people

Looked After Children are among the most socially excluded of all children due to their past experiences therefore their health may be jeopardised and it is important everyone involved in their care can repair and protect their health.

You play an important role in looking after and promoting the health needs of children in your care. This means talking to them and providing them with information about doing the things that keep them health and well.

The Role of Children's Social Workers

The Child's Social Worker should pass on information about the child's health record to the foster parent. The responsibilities of the Child's Social Worker in ensuring that the child's health needs are met include:

- Initiating a health assessment with the child, parent and/or relevant family member, Foster Parent and relevant health professionals.
- Developing a health plan from the assessment.
- Organizing the annual LAC Health Medical.
- Checking and securing the availability of appropriate services to meet these needs when making arrangements for her/his placement.
- Informing the relevant health authorities that the child has been placed with you.
- Ensuring that care plans and health plans are made and reviewed, in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Helping foster parents to develop and maintain good links with health agencies and help them secure services for the child.
- Provision of a letter to reflect the child status.

The Role of Foster Parents

The foster parent's responsibilities are to ensure that the child's health needs are met. This includes the following;

- An understanding that achieving optimum health starts early and includes the provision of good quality care which starts in infancy and which provides a child with a positive sense of identity and self-esteem.
- Registering the child with a doctor, optician and/ or dentist when necessary.

- Encouraging and supporting each child in achieving optimum health and in particular exercising the corporate parent's responsibility as their health educator.
- Providing a home environment which actively encourages and supports a healthy lifestyle and giving attention to diet, personal hygiene and health promotion.
- Ensuring the child attends health appointments and clinics as necessary, including dental and optician appointments.
- Contributing to the child's health plan and care plan.
- Ensuring that the child achieves maximum benefit from education and broader experiences offered by leisure activities, hobbies and sports.
- Helping the child access the services s/he needs and advocating on her/his behalf.

Health Assessments and Health Care Plans

The Local Authority is required to, before making a placement, or as soon as reasonably practicable, make arrangements for a registered medical practitioner to conduct an initial health assessment of the child's state of health unless it has been completed within the last 3 months.

Initial health assessments are arranged by the Children Looked After Nurse who will identify a paediatrician to carry it out.

The paediatrician will prepare a written report of the assessment, which addresses:

- The child's state of health including her/his physical, emotional and mental health.
- The child's health history including, as far as practicable, her/his family health history.
- The effect of the child's health and health history on her/his development.
- Existing arrangements for the child's medical and dental care and treatment and health and dental surveillance.
- The possible need for preventative measures, such as vaccination and immunisation, and screening for vision and hearing and for advice and guidance on health, personal care and health promotion issues appropriate to the child's needs.

Following the assessment, a plan for meeting the child's health care needs will be drawn up. A further assessment of the child's health care needs must be carried out:

- At least once every six months before the child's fifth birthday.
- At least once every twelve months after the child's fifth birthday unless the child, being of sufficient understanding to do so, refuses to consent to the assessment.

Following further assessment, the child's health care plan will be reviewed.

Registration with a GP and Dentist

All Looked After Children must be registered with a GP. You should discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker, and they in turn will check with the Child's Social Worker and

agree if the child is to remain registered with their family GP or be registered with your GP.

There are advantages in the child remaining registered with their own GP. The GP will have background knowledge of the child's health care history and needs, and possibly detailed knowledge of their family's health history which may be relevant for the child's current and future health care needs. The child's health care records will also be held by the child's own GP and transferring to another GP will mean these records also need to be transferred, with the possible result that there is delay in the new GP getting hold of important information.

However, these advantages may be outweighed by the advantages of registration with your GP, particularly where the child's placement with you is expected to be a lengthy one or you do not live close to the child's own GP.

If there are difficulties registering the child with an NHS dentist, Foster Parents/social workers should contact the Looked After Children's Nurse for advice in the first instance.

Responsibility for day to day arrangements for such care will usually be delegated to you.

Optical Care

The health care plan should identify any specific needs the child has for optical care and the arrangements for meeting these should be recorded in the Placement Agreement. Foster parents are responsible for arranging and attending with a foster child for their eye tests.

Immunizations

We expect all Looked After Children to receive the full range of Immunizations recommended by the Department of Health.

Where the birth parent of an accommodated child objects to a particular immunisation (e.g. MMR) their wishes must be respected other than where the child is of sufficient age and understanding (as judged by a medical practitioner) to give their own consent. Where the birth parent of a child in care objects to particular immunisation, guidance should be sought from the Looked after Children Nurse and legal advice obtained.

For many asylum seeking children, their immunisation statuses will be unknown and a course of primary immunisation may need to be undertaken. Parents/social workers should seek advice from the Looked after Children (LAC) Nurse.

Personal Child Health Care Record

Social workers are expected to obtain the child's Personal Child Health Record (Red Book) from the parent when the child becomes looked after.

This should be passed to you and you should ensure that it is kept up to date and returned to the Child's Social Worker at the end of the placement.

Consent to Medical Examination and Treatment - Children Aged 16 and Over

Once young people reach the age of 16, they are presumed in law to be competent to give consent themselves for their own surgical, medical or dental treatment and any associated procedures; such as investigations, anaesthesia or nursing care. This means that in many respects they should be treated as adults – for example if a signature on a consent form is necessary, they can sign for themselves. However, it is still good practice to encourage competent children to involve their families in decision making. Where a competent child does ask for their confidence to be kept, it must be respected unless disclosure can be justified on the grounds of ‘public interest’ e.g. that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Consent to Medical Examination and Treatment – Children Under the Age of 16

The courts have stated that children and young people under 16 years of age will be competent to give valid consent to a particular intervention if they have “sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed” (Frasier guidelines, sometimes known as “Gillick competence”).

In other words, there is no specific age when a child becomes competent to consent to treatment: it depends both on the child and on the seriousness and complexity of the treatment being proposed.

If a child under 16 is competent to consent for her or himself to a particular intervention, it is still good practice to involve the family in decision making unless the child specifically requests that this should not happen and cannot be persuaded otherwise. As with older children, a request for confidentiality must be respected unless the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm without disclosure

Consent of Birth Parents

Within the context of the above guidance on children’s rights to give or withhold consent, the consent of birth parents (and other holders of parental responsibility) should be obtained for both routine and emergency assessment and treatment wherever possible.

Where a birth parent withholds consent and there is concern that the child’s health, welfare or development may suffer as a result, the Child’s Social Worker may need to seek legal advice, with a view to obtaining a Court order.

Consent by the Local Authority – This must be obtained prior to certain procedures, please ensure this is discussed with your Supervising Social Worker

Nurture Fostering's consent to examination or treatment is required:

- Where the procedure involves surgery, general anesthesia or is otherwise intrusive (excluding routine injections and routine dental care) or major, the Director of Social Care (if the child is subject to legal orders Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or Full Care Order) consent is required and if the child is Accommodated (Section 20 Children Act 1989) the consent of the person with parental responsibility is required.
- In all other cases the Team Manager consents or if the child is accommodated under Section 20 Children Act 1989, the person with parental responsibility is required to give consent.
- If either of the above is not available, or when the office is closed, Foster Parents must contact Nurtures Out of Hours number to gain consent – 0208 690 9012

Medication

All medication prescribed by a doctor or over the counter medication given to the foster child must be recorded on a Medication Record Sheet or the Prescribed Medication Programme Sheet, as well as in your daily log.

First Aid

There is an expectation that all Foster Parents will undertake First Aid training offered by the agency. This will be discussed with you by your Supervising Social Worker. Most childhood accidents can be dealt with fairly easily although, if you have any doubts, you should seek medical advice.

It is advisable to keep a small first aid box, which should ideally contain the following:

- Assorted adhesive plasters
- Antiseptic wipes
- Safety pins
- Sterile dressing pad with tie
- Sterile eye pad
- Disposable triangular bandages

Some children are allergic to some ointments and lotions in common use and it is advisable to check at the beginning of the placement about whether the child has any specific allergies.

Hygiene

The use of good hygiene practices in all daily activities will prevent cross-infection of many infections, including HIV and Hepatitis B.

The Government recommends the following basic hygiene precautions as good practice in all situations:

- Cover cuts or sores on the hands with waterproof plasters or dressings
- Wash your hands thoroughly before carrying out any first aid on cuts or broken skin
- Wash your hands after clearing up any body fluids such as blood, semen, urine or faeces
- Use plastic gloves for first aid whenever possible
- Use rubber gloves for heavily soiled material
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors or towels
- Cuts should be washed with soap and water
- Any splashes of blood should be washed off immediately
- Domestic bleach, diluted one part in ten, should be poured on to spilled blood as soon as possible and then covered with paper towels
- Disposable items, such as paper towels, tampons, etc., should be burnt or flushed away
- Non-disposable items, such as terry nappies or bedding, should be washed in a machine at 80°C

HIV/AIDS

Where it is known that a child is HIV positive, the information will always be shared with the foster parent. Deciding who “needs to know”, and the issue of confidentiality generally, will form part of the continuing discussions with the Child’s Social Worker.

Where a child is known to be HIV positive, prospective foster parents will be approached to explore the issue in principle without the identity of the child being revealed. Only when agreement had been reached about the placement will identifying details be shared.

You must not share the HIV status of a child or their family without first obtaining the agreement of the Child’s Social Worker.

Nurture Fostering will ensure that foster parents who are working with children who are potentially at risk of developing HIV infection, receive appropriate training, education and

support. This will ensure that foster parents with worries or concerns about HIV are reassured and that services are provided appropriately and sensitively. We are equally committed to ensuring that people, including children, are not put at risk by cross infection.

An HIV infected child may be vulnerable to picking up infections, and exposure to measles and chicken pox is of particular concern. Ailments and minor accidents may require immediate medical attention.

The virus itself is not very strong and easily dies outside the body. Even in the wet state the virus can only live for 20 seconds when exposed to the air. The virus is destroyed outside the body by heat, drying, soap and water, detergents and bleach.

- You cannot get the virus from ordinary social contact.
- The virus cannot be passed on through touching, shaking hands or through saliva or tears.
- Sharing cups, cutlery, glasses, food, clothes, towels, door-knobs, etc., present no risk and neither does using the same toilet seat as a person who has AIDS or the virus.
- The virus is not transmitted by social kissing, coughing or sneezing.
- Swimming pools are safe.
- Nurture Fostering will not consider authorising a child to be tested for HIV, other than where medical advice indicates that the outcome will undoubtedly be of significant benefit to the child's health.

Where appropriate, the child will be involved in the decision-making process. The consent of those who have parental responsibility will always be sought.

Hepatitis

Hepatitis B is a highly contagious blood-borne condition which is more infectious than HIV because there are potentially more areas of risk of transmission (for example, it could be passed on via saliva). Staff and foster parents working with children with Hepatitis or children coming from parts of the world where Hepatitis is known to be prevalent should get vaccinated. You should speak to your Supervising Social Worker if you have concerns about this.

Foster parents working with children where they are not considered to be at risk of contracting the Hepatitis B infection, are required to maintain and follow standard hygiene procedures whenever blood or other body fluids are involved. If you have any concerns, please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker.

Sexual Health

Sexual health requires children to be comfortable with the physical, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of their sexuality. In order to achieve this, children need to be in an atmosphere in which they feel able to talk openly and can seek advice and support without being judged.

The foster parent may find it easy or difficult to think and talk about children's sexuality but you need to be prepared for how you will respond to children needing or seeking your support. You need to try to keep channels of communication with the child open and provide them with opportunities for them to talk about feelings, getting on with other people, their bodies and sex. This will be of particular importance during puberty when children are coming to terms with the changes in their bodies. For example, girls will need support and understanding as they experience menstruation for the first time.

If you find discussing these issues difficult or feel that you do not have sufficient knowledge to answer children's questions, you should tell your Supervising Social Worker who will be able to arrange further training and guidance to help you become more comfortable in talking about sex and relationships.

Sexual Identity

You should not assume that children in your care are heterosexual and need to consider your own attitude towards gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual children and young people and ensure that you do not give young people negative messages about sexual orientation.

Gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual young people may feel unable to ask for help and advice if they detect negative attitudes towards their sexuality. This in turn may lead to gaps in their own knowledge and understanding that may put them at higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases as well as low self-esteem.

Contraception

The UK has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates and all available research shows that these levels are particularly high for care leavers.

Young people who are looked after have the same rights to treatment and confidentiality from health professionals as other young people and this includes access to contraception advice and services.

Health professionals are able to give contraception advice and services to young people under the age of 16 without parental consent.

Masturbation

It is not uncommon for children to masturbate and should not be automatically seen as a sign of abuse. You should make sure that the child understands that while masturbation

is natural, this is a private activity and is unacceptable in the company of other children or adults. If you are concerned that a child's behaviour may suggest abuse has occurred then you should seek advice from the Child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker.

Diet

A healthy diet is essential for appropriate child development; however you must remember that what you and your family eat is not necessarily what a child is used to. Individual likes and dislikes should be discussed with parents and you should also respect any religious requirements or other wishes, for instance a child is vegetarian. It is normally advisable to attempt to reach a compromise with foster children in areas of dispute.

Young people should be encouraged to take part in shopping for food so that they can make choices and have an awareness of budgeting.

Alcohol

Alcohol is widely used and accepted in our society. However, it is a drug which young people can easily become addicted to and there are significant health risks associated with over consumption, in particular binge drinking. A secondary risk is the danger that young people may put themselves in danger by their behaviour while under the influence of alcohol; and this is often a contributory factor in road traffic accidents, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, violent and other anti-social behaviour.

There are a number of ways you can support young people:

- Clearly state what actions you expect the young person to take when confronted with substance use. Young people who know what their Foster Parents expect from them are much less likely to use substances, including alcohol.
- Discuss alcohol use within the home that your children are allowed to witness. Parents need to make it clear how they want their children to handle substances, such as alcohol and tobacco. Young people need to have controlled exposure to learn rules of acceptable use of alcohol.
- Help young people find leisure activities and venues for activities that are substance-free. Then keep track of where, with whom, and what they are doing after school and during other free times
- Limit the access young people have to substances such as alcohol. Young people use substances that are available. They report that they sneak alcohol from home stocks, take cigarettes from relatives, and obtain marijuana from people that they know well.
- Inform young people about the honest dangers that are associated with alcohol use and abuse. Although young people are not highly influenced by such information, some discussion of negative consequences has some impact on the decisions they make. Especially emphasize how alcohol clouds one's judgment and makes one more likely to be harmed in other ways.

Generating a confrontation regarding drinking or any other behaviour is likely to be counter-productive. If alcohol consumption seems to be becoming a serious problem you should seek professional advice as soon as possible, for example drug and alcohol service – your supervising social worker can support you to identify appropriate services.

If a young person returns to your home under the influence of drugs or alcohol you may seek emergency medical attention for them if you feel it is necessary. If you are in any doubt or are concerned about managing the situation you should seek immediate advice from your Supervising Social Worker or the out of hours social worker.

Smoking

Nurture's policy that smoking, including of burning tobacco products and vaping (using e-cigarettes) is not allowed by foster parents in the presence of children and young people, or when conveying them in motor vehicles in line with legislation.

The policy also reflects our interest in promoting the health and safety of all staff, service users, children and young people in its area of jurisdiction. It is illegal for young people under the age of 18 to buy cigarettes or tobacco

Drugs

Drug abuse is an increasing problem in our society and amongst young people in particular. It can be difficult to tell if a young person is using drugs but some possible signs include:

- Sudden mood changes
- Unusual irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Bouts of drowsiness or sleepiness
- Evidence of lying or furtive behaviour
- Unexplained loss of money or belongings from the home
- Unusual smells, stains or marks on the body or clothes or around the house
-

There may be other explanations for some of these signs so it is important not to jump to the wrong conclusion. If you are concerned you should speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Mental Health

Many Looked After Children will have significant emotional and behavioural problems and some may have significant mental health issues. While some children may need specialist therapy or mental health services, Foster Parents can help all children by:

- Establishing a trusting relationship with the child by being honest and consistent

- Showing the child that you accept her/him as a person, even if you do not accept all of their behaviour.
- Accepting the importance for the child of their friendships, even if you cannot accept their friends.
- Letting them know that you respect their individuality and that they are unique and special, not just like everyone else.
- Giving feedback sensibly and calmly, and be transparent in discussing problems.
- Helping them to increase their range of skills in solving personal problems.
- Building on their strengths and weaknesses – praising them wherever possible.
- Looking out for other ways to build their self-esteem such as music or dance lessons and pursuing appropriate resources to provide this for them.
- Do not try to cope on your own! Be prepared to ask for help and support from your supervising social worker.

ATTENDING TO A CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Day Care and Early Years

Most young children benefit from the social contact of other children and the chance to explore new things. Many also enjoy the benefits of pre-school education. This is particularly true of children who have been under stimulated in their early years, and if you are fostering a child under school age who is not already attending a nursery, you should discuss the possibility of using such provision with your social worker.

Supporting Children in School

Foster parents are expected to actively promote the education of Looked After Children and meet the following standards:

- That they are familiar with the child's educational history and assessed educational needs.
- Ensure an effective regular contact and co-operation between the Foster Parent and her/his school.
- The child's foster parents take an interest in and encourage the child's education to include regular attendance at school functions and meetings at school to discuss homework, options and careers.
- Parents are aware of and actively pursue the opportunities provided at school including facilities, events, parents meetings and guidance at strategic points in the child's educational career.
- The child is enabled to take advantage of school facilities, outings, recreational events and options which take account of her/his background, interest, abilities and potential.

- Parents are actively involved at all stages in the preparation and reviews of statements of Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- The child's regular school attendance is actively encouraged and monitored by Foster Parents.
- The child's achievements at school are appropriately acknowledged in the foster home.
- The foster home provides opportunities for the child to pursue his/her education including quiet space, available literature, access to information and time set aside for homework and school projects.
- The child considers that his/her parents encourage and support the importance of his/her education and is helped by them to get the best out of educational opportunities.
- The Foster Parent takes advantages of joint training programs for Foster Parents, teachers and schools which address the identification of educational needs and clarify roles and responsibilities in responding to those needs.
- The Foster Parent contributes to the assessment of the child's educational needs and progress for the planning and review process.
- The foster parent contributes to the delivery of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and attends parents evening on a regular basis.

There are many ways you can support your foster child at school, starting with agreeing with the social worker who is going to inform the school the child is placed with you and what information is to be shared with the school. This may be straightforward if the child is attending a school already known to you, but a bit more effort is required if unknown to you and you do not have links. It is important that you establish links with the school as soon as possible and ensure that you receive from them all the information that would be provided to a child of the school. You need to be clear what the schools expectations and policies are in areas such as school uniform and homework.

Every school has a designated teacher for Looked After Children who will be able to offer specific advice and support.

You should agree with the school, the child's parents and the Child Social Worker what your respective roles are and who will be responsible for giving and receiving information. Otherwise there is a risk that either the social worker or you do not receive information that you need or that the schools are not kept informed of significant issues for the child.

You may find it helpful to consider the following issues:

- Are you clear what the educational status of the child in your care is; do they attend school full or part-time?
- Does the child have an Education Health Care Plan [EHCP]
- Have you checked the child's progress in settling into a new school or the impact on an existing school of the child becoming looked after?
- Do you know when the next parents' evening is and have you agreed with the social worker and parents who will attend?

- Is the child happy and confident at school or are there problems you need to address?
- Do you support your foster child with reading and homework?
- If your foster child is not currently attending school (if they have been excluded for example) what alternative educational provision has been made

Schools

A Looked After Child would be given priority and will always be accepted at the first choice school identified, when starting school, and moving to secondary school. Children will stay at their own schools wherever possible. If a change of school is inevitable you and/or the Child's Social Worker should contact your local school to make the necessary arrangements. If you have any difficulties in this you should consult the Child's Social Worker. You should also remember that the child and their parents have a right to be consulted over the choice of a new school.

Foster parents are asked to maintain strong links with schools and colleges, attend open evenings and any other meetings that should be necessary. You should try to encourage parents to attend with you as much as possible. You will also receive school reports and these should be shared with the social worker and the child's parents. Expectations of all parties should be made clear in Placement Plans and Care Plans and reviewed on a regular basis.

Personal Education Plans [PEP]

Every Looked After Child must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which:

- Ensures access to services and support
- Contributes to stability
- Minimises' disruption and broken schooling
- Signals particular and special needs
- Establishes clear goals
- Acts as a record of progress and achievement

When a child becomes looked after, the Child's Social Worker will inform the child's school and local education authority. The Child's Social Worker is responsible for ensuring that a PEP is drawn up within 20 school days of the child becoming looked after or entering a new school.

There should be a minimum of 2 PEPs a year . There can be more if there are issues which need closer monitoring. The plan is completed jointly by the Child's Social Worker and the School Designated LAC Teacher. Foster parents should receive a copy from their Supervising Social Worker.

The foster parent must attend the PEP along with the child, their social worker and

Designated Teacher, and on occasions a member of the Virtual School Team. Along with the Care Plan and Placement Agreement, the outcome of the PEP will make it clear who is responsible for every aspect of meeting the child's educational needs, including your role as a Foster Parent. The PEP will be kept under review and amended as the needs of the child change.

Pupils' Premium

This is an amount of money allocated for each Looked After Child in education up to 16. The money is managed by the Virtual School and the school that the child attends, to offer any identified extra support, educationally, and emotionally. A discussion would be had at the PEP about if and how the money could support the child. This money is given to the school to offer and improve resources and is not available in cash to the child or foster parent.

School Attendance Problems

Some children may try to avoid school for a variety of reasons and close liaison with the school and the Child's Social Worker is vital.

Some school attendance problems are more serious and may be a sign of emotional disturbance or anxiety. Research in this area is extensive and there is no space in this handbook to cover it in great detail. However, it is important to make distinction between "truants" and "school phobics".

Truants tend to leave for school in the normal fashion and will often go to registration. They then leave and either wander around the streets or join up with friends who are also truanting. There are a number of factors in a child's background that may lead to truancy, including poor parenting, lack of interest in the child's achievements and a general dislike of school. One of the problems with truancy is that it is often associated with petty crime such as shop-lifting and the longer it goes on the more difficult it becomes to re-integrate the child.

Once non-attendance at school is highlighted, the response needs to be immediate. It is important for the child to know that you are in touch with the school and that there is communication between you. It is also useful to establish rewards and incentives for attending school, rather than punishments for not going.

School phobia can result either from an anxiety about leaving home or anxiety about going to school and may be accompanied by complaints of mild illness. It is easy to become caught up in this and again, early discussions with the school and your social worker together with the Child's Social Worker are essential. It may then be possible to identify precisely what is causing the anxiety. In a minority of cases it may be that some form of special schooling is required, thus allowing the child a more sheltered environment with smaller classes. In most cases, a return to normal schooling can be done gradually providing there is understanding and good communication on all sides. Do introduce yourself to your foster child's teacher and head teacher, and ensure that the

school has good lines of communication with you.

Exclusions

Unfortunately a child's behaviour or attendance may reach a point where all efforts to control the situation have failed and the school decides to exclude the child. Exclusion is a way of trying to break a pattern and showing the child that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Exclusions may be for a fixed term or permanent. If your foster child is temporarily or permanently excluded, their social worker must ensure that the child is engaged in alternative educational activity during the school day. We also expect that Foster Parent will be available to provide care for a child during the day if necessary.

Educational and Health Care Plan [EHCP]

There are a number of steps a school may take to address pupils' special educational needs and the main ones you will come across are Individual Education Plans (IEP) and The Education Health Care Plan [EHCP]

An IEP is a written plan of action to target specific areas of difficulty for improvement. It includes actions by the school, teachers and child.

EHCP sets out the child's personal educational needs and how the council proposes to meet these. This may include extra teaching or support such as:

- A few hours individual support within the classroom
- Some individual teaching outside the classroom
- An individual timetable
- Specialist teaching or equipment
- A specialist school or/and transport

The Statement will be reviewed annually and you and the Child's Social Worker will be involved in this review.

It is also likely that children separated from their families will have emotional and behavioural responses to this separation. These may lead to problems in sustaining a placement in a mainstream educational setting and achieving the child's potential without the provision of additional support.

Social workers, teachers and parents must work together to identify, assess, plan for and address the special educational needs of children looked after.

Further Education

While government guidance on the education of Looked After Children has tended to focus on the compulsory years of schooling, attention also needs to be paid to promoting educational achievement beyond these years.

Participation in education and training is the single most effective way to enable young people to acquire and develop skills for independent living and the most reliable route to better life chances.

We must encourage all Looked After Children to undertake further education or training beyond their sixteenth birthday.

To this end, consideration of the child's needs in terms of education will remain a core element of statutory childcare reviews and Pathway Plans will be used to identify how these needs are to be met.

We will ensure that young people have access to the necessary financial support to enable them to take advantage of appropriate further education or training opportunities.

Supporting Parents

While you will be responsible for promoting a child's educational achievement on a day to day basis you cannot achieve this without appropriate support.

This will be achieved by:

- Meeting costs arising from a child's education in accordance with Nurture Fostering's payment scheme for parents with any additional costs paid as agreed in the Placement Agreement.
- Ensuring that all children have an appropriate full-time, permanent educational placement.
- Making appropriate arrangements for structured occupation during school hours in agreement with you.
- Ensuring that your role in terms of school contact is clearly laid out in the Placement Agreement.
- Ensuring that the Child's Social Worker advocates on the child's behalf as a corporate parent in terms of admissions, exclusions and other issues affecting a child's education.
- Providing you with such information and assistance, including, equipment, as may be necessary to meet the educational needs of any child placed.
- Providing you with appropriate training and development opportunities.

16+ Bursary

This is government money given to all looked after young people in care or who have been in care attending further education. It is to help with travel, books, equipment,

clothing, meals etc. This money is paid direct into the young person's bank account weekly for each week at college [no money is paid during holidays]. The college manages the Bursary and they have the application forms. Apply in the first week the young person starts. This money can be withheld in part or whole by the college for poor attendance and behaviour.

If staying on at school for 6th Form, they are also entitled and will need to speak to the school to apply for the Bursary. You can ask the Virtual School or the young person's social worker for support and provide written letter of evidence to the college/school that they are a looked after young person. Finally, it is important that every child has a bank account at age 16 otherwise their bursary may not be paid by the college/school.

SAFE CARING

Safe Caring Policies

A Safe Caring policy must be provided and kept up to date for each foster home.

The Assessing Social Worker should have ensured that guidelines were produced during the assessment process. The Assessing Social Worker should have ensured that all members of the household were involved in this process and agreement reached on the final policy.

A copy of your safe caring policy should be retained by your Supervising Social Worker on your file and these should be discussed with the Child's Social Worker at the point of Placement Agreement Meeting. Consideration will need to be given at this stage to the needs of the child and implication of the policy. In some cases it may be apparent that the proposed match is not suitable and an alternative placement should be identified.

The policy should be shared with the child, in an age appropriate way, as early as possible in the placement. Ideally this will be prior to or at the point of placement, but in all cases must be done no later than the Placement Agreement meeting. In some cases the policy may need to be adjusted because of the specific needs or background of the child and the placement agreement meeting should be used as the opportunity to agree any required changes.

Safe caring policy will need to be revised as the circumstances of the household change.

This should be done immediately if there are significant changes such as someone joining the household or you move house. In such cases the revised policy will need to be cleared with the social worker of any child in placement.

The policy should also be considered at the point of every child's review or Placement Agreement review to ensure they remain up to date and appropriate.

Transporting Children by Car

The foster parent may need to consider the appropriateness of transporting some children alone in a car, in particular if the child is known to have been abused. Where possible, this should be avoided, especially for men. If you have to travel alone with the child, then you may feel the need for the child to sit in the back of the car. You must ensure that children traveling in your car are properly restrained using an approved car seat or booster seat and/or seat belt. Children under 1.35 meters in height or under the age of 12 years must use a car seat or booster seat designed for their age and weight. Young people over 1.35 meters tall or over the age of 12 years must always wear a seat belt. This is a legal requirement and if broken the parent may be personally responsible for the fine of £500. Parents must have a fully comprehensive Insurance cover.

Visitors and Lodgers

Your Assessing Social Worker would have discussed with you who are regular visitors to your home and the implications of this during your assessment to be a foster parent. All those who live in your house over the age of 18 years old, including lodgers will need to provide a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. This will also be necessary for regular visitors to your house if they have significant contact with or are ever to be left in charge of fostered children.

Babysitting/ Back Up Parents

As for any child, there will be times when fostered children need to be cared for by baby-sitters or a back-up parents while the foster parent is out.

At the time of your assessment, you will identify back up parents, who will support you in your fostering role. The back-up parents can be your friends or part of your immediate or extended family. Applicants for Back Up Parents will be assessed and they are required to attend some key training i.e. first aid. The foster parent will be responsible for ensuring they have an updated DBS check.

Technology

Laptops, phones [all kinds] Xbox 360, PlayStations give full access to the world of the internet and chat rooms and social media . The many positives of today's technology can also be a danger to many vulnerable young people and children who are in our care

Looked After Children often have low self-esteem, can be isolated from their peers and may have experienced abuse. All of these factors can leave them open to risks associated with internet abuse.

Some of the ways you can protect children are:

- Talk to your child about their internet use and take an interest. Your involvement is the best way of keeping them safe.
- Place the computer where the whole family can use it, rather than out of sight in

- a bedroom.
- Talk to children to agree what kind of sites they are allowed to visit. Check regularly to make sure they stay within these agreed limits.
 - Search out positive and fun sites. Many TV programmes and other children's media suggest good sites to visit, including their own.
 - Tell children not to give out their personal details, including their name, address and telephone number or school to anyone over the internet.
 - Be positive! The internet is a fantastic resource for learning, entertainment and communication. Just like in the real world you need to take a few precautions.
 - Let children know they can come to you if something they don't like happens on line.
 - Try not to overreact. This could make a child more secretive about their internet use and close down lines of communication between you.
 - Remember that all the advice here also applies to going online over a mobile phone.
 - If you decide to use internet filtering software, talk this over with the child. Any ground rules you then agree will be much more effective

The above checklist includes material from the NSPCC

You might want to consider the use of parental controls or internet filtering software. You will find a comprehensive list of what is available at www.getnetwise.org

The most important safety message of all is to ensure that children know never to go alone to meet someone they have met online and to never reveal any personal contact details.

Children Missing From Care

A child (i.e. a young person under the age of 18 years) is to be considered 'missing' if their whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance. They will be considered missing until they are located and their well-being or otherwise is established.

Unauthorised Absence

Some children absent themselves from home or care for a short period and then return, often their whereabouts are known or may be quickly established through contact with family or friends or are unknown but the children are not considered at risk. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed as a boundary testing activity which is well within the range of normal teenage behaviour. These children have taken 'unauthorised absence', and would not usually come within the definition of 'missing'.

Prevention & Planning

Prior to each placement of a child, Children's Services staff (placing social workers, residential workers and foster parents), must assess the risks of the child absencing her/himself. The points set out below should be considered and recorded in the Placement Plan.

An initial risk assessment must be completed for each child or young person who is looked after, by the time of the first review (i.e. within 20 days).

Placement agreement planning must include identification of those to be notified should the child or young person go missing. This should include:

- Parents, or anyone else with parental responsibility
- Other relatives or friends to whom the child or young person might run
- Responsible social worker and/or Team Manager (or out of hours social worker outside usual office hours)
- Senior managers within Children's Services
- Police

Information Sharing Form

Where the Risk Assessment indicates that there is a high risk of a child going missing, it is good practice for foster parents to prepare an Information Sharing Form containing the information the Police and other agencies will need to locate the child if they do go missing. This form should always be provided to the Police at the time of reporting a Looked After Child missing.

Responding to an Incident

You should contact your Supervising Social Worker, the Child's Social Worker and/or the out of office social worker as soon as you have reason to believe that a child is missing. The Police must also be notified as soon as possible and you should agree with your Supervising Social Worker or out of hours Social Worker who is going to notify the Police. However, you should not delay contacting the Police if you have been unable to contact the social worker. The Police will conduct an investigation into all reports of 'missing' children.

Information to be made available

When reporting a missing child to the Police (or other agencies, as appropriate), the person making the referral should complete and provide the Police with the Information Sharing Form. The minimum information provided should include:

- A description of the child (name, date of birth, physical appearance). Recent photograph, if possible
- When the child was last seen and with whom

- Family addresses
- Known acquaintances
- The basis of the risk assessment and classification of High Risk
- The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist

The Police will want to search the address at which the missing child was last seen, this should be negotiated so as to cause minimum disruption to the child's family home/residential unit/foster parent's home.

In all normal circumstances, all absences should be reported to your Supervising Social Worker and after 24 hours, it needs to be reported to the police. When a child goes missing for 3 days, a Strategy Meeting would be convened by the Child's Social Worker and chaired by the IRO and attended by the Police Officer from the Police Public Safety Unit. Other attendees should include:

- Staff directly working with the child or young person
- The child or young person's parents or parents
- Other professionals who may have a role to play
- The Senior Child Protection Co-coordinator

This meeting will allow senior managers from Children's Services and the Police to determine:

- What actions have or will be taken to expedite the discovery of the child or young person
- Whether further action, including media involvement, is required
- Identify who is responsible for actions
- A time-scale for further review of the case

Monitoring

Foster parents are expected to maintain records of each occasion when a Looked After Child is identified as 'missing' or having taken 'unauthorised absence'. These records should be made available for inspection under the Children Act 1989. The records should include:

- The child's name and date of birth
- If possible, a recent photograph of the child
- Date and time the child was reported missing or absent
- A completed Social Care Risk Assessment Record
- Category of absence ('missing' or 'unauthorised')
- Whether the Police were informed and the concerns conveyed to the

- Police/reasons for not informing the Police
- Whether the social worker was informed
- Action taken by social worker
- The date and time the child returned

Communication

Foster parents should talk to other foster children they may have placed with them to seek information about the child's whereabouts.

The child's school should always be informed; they may have valuable information which would assist in establishing her/his whereabouts. Any such information should be passed immediately to the Police.

Recording

If a child's absence continues beyond a few hours and falls within this procedure, all agencies should note their discussions, decisions, actions taken and messages received/given; and the Child's Social Worker (or other agreed key worker/lead professional) should keep a single agreed record on the child's file. Foster parents should record the information in the daily log/diary, with a duplicate entry for the child's file (e.g. photocopies).

Locating the Child and Their Return

If a child is 'missing' the Police, parents, social worker and foster parents should commence contingency planning for when the child is located. Plans should include:

- Will the child return to the placement or are they safe in the location where they are found?
- If the child is to return, how will s/he be conveyed to their placement?
- Do the police wish to interview the child where they are located or after they have returned to their placement/home address?
- Who will be an appropriate 'independent person' to talk to the child when s/he is located/returned? (see below)

Children who have repeated 'unauthorised' absences should also be offered an independent person to talk to. Consideration must be given to this when a set number of absconding's are exceeded in a given period such as 3 occasions in 28 days.

The police are however not given the power to use force to take children into police protection. There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there would be no legal grounds for taking them into police protection or where to do so would be unsustainable because of the child unwillingness to co-operate. In these cases, the police and the accountable manager from Children's Services will need to liaise to discuss what steps may be necessary in order to safeguard the child's welfare.

Police Interview

The police may interview a child or young person when they return. The interview consists of a simple series of questions about where the child was whilst missing, where they went, what they did, who they were with etc. If the child makes an allegation of crime that occurred whilst they were missing or that contributed to her/him running away, the police will record this allegation and take appropriate action.

Confidentiality

As a foster parent, you will often be in receipt of sensitive and personal information. We expect you to ensure that this is kept confidential and only shared with those that we have agreed with you need to know. You should also ensure that any written information on children is kept secure and not accessible to anyone who is not authorized to see it.

This duty of confidence is not absolute however and needs to be balanced against your common law duty to do all that is reasonable to care for children placed with you. It is conceivable for example that you are unhappy / concerned about the actions and behaviour of a member of staff or the way that a child's case and feel that this needs to be brought to the attention of Ofsted or the Children's Commissioner. In such a case it may be claimed that disclosure was being made in the public interest and the interest of the child.

Such a justification might be challenged however and therefore needs to be soundly based. If the need ever arises where you need to consider disclosing confidential interest because you believe it to be in the public or child's best interest, you should consider first seeking specialist advice.

Bullying

Bullying is not easy to define and there are as many definitions of bullying as there are incidents.

Most bullying will include:

- Deliberate hostility and aggression to the victim

- A victim who is weaker and less powerful than the bullies
- Distress and pain for the victim

Bullying is often ongoing but can also be a one off incident and might include:

- Verbal abuse, including persistent teasing or name calling
- Physical abuse, including actual or threatened harm
- Sexual abuse, including unwanted physical contact or verbal abuse including abusive comments on the victims sexuality
- Racial abuse, which may be physical, written or verbal
- Emotional abuse, including, tormenting or subjecting the victim to persistent ridicule or humiliation

All bullies need victims. These will almost always be someone who is weaker and/or less confident than the bully.

Bullies will target victims by focusing on something about the victim that is different in order to try and justify their behaviour. This may be the victim's appearance – weight, height or other physical features or it may be something else that makes the victim stand out from the majority of their peers – social class, religion or ethnicity.

By definition, children in foster care are different – they do not live at home with their parent(s). Therefore they immediately fit the profile of potential victims for the bully.

In addition there are a number of other common characteristics of foster children that increase the potential for them being targeted. These include:

- Many will already have been targeted and abused by others, including their primary parents
- Many will be developmentally immature.
- Many will be lacking in self-confidence.
- Some may have experienced prior abuse or victimisation as the only time they have received attention.
- Foster children are frequently isolated from their family, peers and other support systems when they become looked after, including perhaps a change of school.
- Frequent moves may have led to a sense of insecurity and a fear or inability in developing positive relationships with peers.
- A prior lack of positive attachments.

There are many reasons why children bully. Some may do it to cope with a difficult situation in their own life such the separation of their parents. Others will see it as a way of gaining kudos from their peers. Some are just used to getting their own way and may not even recognise the effect of their actions on their victims.

Some children will become bullies as a result of being a victim themselves. It therefore needs to be recognised that the reasons for some foster children becoming victims are also reasons for others becoming bullies.

This will have potential implications for parents fostering more than one child and needs to be borne in mind if it is suspected that a foster child is being bullied.

Any of the following behaviours may indicate that a child is the victim of bullying. There may equally be other explanations that should also be considered by parents and social workers.

A child may indicate by their behaviour that s/he is being bullied. If your child shows some of the following signs, bullying may be responsible and you might want to ask if someone is bullying or threatening them.

Children may:

- Be frightened of walking to or from school
- Change their usual route
- Not want to go on the school bus
- Beg you to drive them to school
- Be unwilling to go to school (or be school phobic)
- Feel ill in the mornings
- Begin truanting
- Begin doing poorly in their school work
- Come home regularly with clothes or books destroyed
- Come home starving (bully has taken dinner money)
- Become withdrawn, start stammering, lack confidence
- Become distressed and anxious, stop eating
- Attempt or threaten suicide
- Cry themselves to sleep; have nightmares
- Have their possessions 'go missing'
- Ask for money or start stealing money (to pay the bully)
- Continually 'lose' their pocket money
- Refuse to say what's wrong (too frightened of the bully)
- Have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- Begin to bully other children or siblings
- Become aggressive and unreasonable

- Give improbable excuses to explain any of the above'

(Taken from 'What Is Bullying' by Kidscape 2001)

You should ensure that you record all suspected or actual incidents and report these to the Child's Social Worker as soon as possible.

With the social worker, you should formulate a plan to address the concerns and this should include:

- Who should talk to the child
- Who else needs to be notified (e.g. schools, birth parents)
- Whether any immediate action is needed to safeguard the child

After the concerns have been discussed with the child, if bullying is confirmed or continues to be suspected, a protection plan should be drawn up to attempt to ensure the bullying ceases and does not re-occur.

The social worker will work with you to draw up the plan with the involvement of relevant others who may include:

- The foster child
- Other children in the household
- The foster child's birth parent(s)
- The bully
- The social workers and parents of other children in the foster home
- Other relevant professionals such as teachers and therapists

If the bullying is being done by someone outside of the foster home attempts should be made to engage the child's parents in helping to put an end to the bullying. The social worker rather than the parent should normally undertake any contact with parents in such circumstances.

You should record all suspected and actual incidents of bullying against or by any foster child in your care. These should be reported to the Child's Social Worker as soon as possible.

Death of a Looked After Child

The death of a child in foster care is an extremely rare event. When it does occur this will obviously be extremely distressing for all involved. We will ensure that you are given all the support you need to help you cope with the death of a child, including buying in specialist counseling if necessary.

There are a number of other steps that we will be required to undertake. We will have to:

- Notify Nurture Fostering Ltd
- Notify the Local Authority who in turn will be responsible for:
- Notify the Secretary of State (Department for Education, Schools and Families)
- Notify Ofsted – Nurture will deal with report to Ofsted

When a child who is looked after dies the responsibilities of the Local Authority end, and revert to the parents and those with parental responsibility.

The death of a Looked After Child must immediately be reported to your Supervising Social Worker or, the out of hours, the emergency duty team.

The Child's Social Worker or Team Manager will immediately inform the parents and those with parental responsibility.

The Child's Social Worker must consider whether there are any particular religious or cultural practices to be aware of and additional advice should be sought where necessary. It is essential that the responses from Children's Services staff and the child's parents to specific religious and cultural practices are sensitive and appropriate. For example sometime after the death, a parent of a Hindu or Muslim child may want to give something to the parents, in memory of the foster child.

Care and Control of Children and Young People in Foster Care

It is inevitable that there will be times that you have to exercise some form of control over your foster child just as you do your own children. Hopefully such occasions will be few and far between, but when they do arise you will need to think carefully about what strategies to employ. As a foster parent you will not be permitted to use corporal punishment on any child placed in your care.

The term corporal punishment should be taken to cover an intentional application of force as punishment including smacking, slapping, pinching, squeezing, shaking, throwing missiles, rough handling and all other humiliating forms of treatment or punishment. It also includes punching or pushing in the heat of the moment in response to violence from young people.

This does not prevent you from taking necessary physical action where any other course of action would be likely to fail to avert an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person or to avoid immediate serious damage to property. All incidents must be recorded and reported to your social worker immediately.

Denial of food must also be avoided. It is well established that the enjoyment of eating and drinking is fundamental to a child's healthy physical and emotional development. Meal times are an important social occasion in the life of a child and it would be

inappropriate for a child to be refused meals. Deprivation of food and drink should be taken to include the denial of access to the amounts and range of foods and drinks normally available to children in your home.

This does not prevent you from withholding specific food or drinks on medical advice.

Personal medicines must continue to be administered as must going to the doctor or dentist as necessary. No other form of medicines such as drugs intended to quieten the child and no other unnecessary medical or dental treatment must be given.

No child should be deliberately deprived of sleep and children must not be kept locked up in their own or other rooms.

Fines (other than a Court fine) may not be used as a consequence, but up to two thirds of a child's pocket money may be withheld to pay for any damage they may have caused with the social workers consent. However, on any occasion where a child's pocket money is withheld as a sanction for non-compliance, the money should always be added to their savings or given to them at a later date.

Restriction of contact visits to and from the child's family and friends should not be used as a punishment nor should the withholding of receiving or sending of letters, or making telephone calls to such people. No children should be prevented from getting in contact with their social worker, Children's Guardian, solicitor, Independent Visitor or the Complaints Officer.

Children must not be made to wear clothes that draw attention to themselves, for example, pyjamas during the day.

It is easy to tell you what you must not do but less so to tell you what you should do in any given situation! Discipline involves teaching by words and actions which aim to establish self-discipline. Discussion, good example and gaining co-operation are more desirable and in the longer term more effective methods of control than those prohibited above.

There are many different techniques that you have or will acquire to help children who are misbehaving.

The strategy to be used in any given situation will vary from child to child and situation to situation. Praising, positive re-enforcement and the use of rewards are often effective.

Whatever methods you employ, it is vital that you are consistent and give the child a clear message as to why their behaviour is unacceptable and what they must do. You will also need endless patience and good humour as well as the support of others. Your own family, friends and other parents will be important sources of support, but you should not hesitate to seek help from your Supervising Social Worker.

The use of Physical Restraint

It is unreasonable to expect children not to test boundaries from time to time. Whether it is toddlers exhibiting temper tantrums or direct challenges to a carer's authority by an adolescent, there will always be times when carers need to employ the use of behaviour support and guidance. Good routines and structure is also a necessary aspect of family life to enable children to develop in a safe and secure environment. This policy seeks to provide all involved with a framework within which this necessary order can be maintained, while protecting children and carers alike.

No two children or carers are identical and in applying this policy carers will need to be mindful of the individual needs of specific children. They will also need to be aware that avoiding confrontation and rewarding positive behaviour rather than implementing sanctions are often the most successful techniques available.

There are circumstances when it would be appropriate to intervene physically to prevent behaviour that is prejudicial to the child or others. Examples of such circumstances might include:

- To prevent one child attacking another
- To prevent a child or young person from seriously injuring themselves
- A child refusing to leave another person's room.
- To prevent a young child from running away

In such circumstances physical intervention without contact, such as standing in the way or some forms of intervention with contact such as holding the child's hand or placing a hand on her/his shoulder, may be appropriate.

Indeed some forms of physical intervention may have a positive impact on the child such as holding or cuddling a distressed child or holding a child for their own safety. In certain circumstances, the child's behaviour may mean that the foster parents will be specifically trained to use physical restraint to prevent risks to themselves and or other members of their household.

In themselves, none of the above interventions require any particular recording although you must always be mindful of the circumstances of their intervention and if in doubt follow the instructions below for recording physical restraints.

Physical restraint is a more substantive intervention. By definition it will be against the child's stated will. Its aim is to take control from the child, to stop them from doing whatever they are doing, using the minimum amount of force and therefore the minimum amount of time necessary.

Physical restraint must only be used if a child is in immediate danger of harming themselves, others or causing significant damage to property. It is acceptable to defend self and others from physical violence or threatened violence.

Physical restraint may involve more than one parent, even if the second parent does not physically intervene but witnesses the intervention. You should always seek to avoid the need for physical restraint through dialogue and diversion. The use of restraint is a last resort. If restraint is necessary, a child should, where possible, be pre-warned that a restraint might take place if their behaviour continues.

You must have sound reasons for believing that other methods of intervention would not be appropriate or would fail. Sometimes this will necessitate not intervening physically immediately, but attempting other interventions or assessing the situation (even risking that the situation may worsen).

In assessing the situation, due consideration to the age and understanding of the child must be taken into consideration. Disability and cultural factors might also be significant in determining the type of intervention.

You must at all times be mindful of a child's previous experiences. A child who has been physically or sexually abused may experience any form of physical contact differently from how it was intended.

You should not attempt any intervention if you do not think it is achievable. Consideration should be given to the involvement of the emergency services. If possible, consideration should be given to the timing and place of the restraint, paying attention to minimising the involvement of other children, as to witness a restraint may be distressing for any child.

There may be occasions when physical restraint is necessary to remove either a weapon or a dangerous substance from a child. This, however, does not include either physical or intimate searches of a child such as searching any clothing that they are wearing.

Restraint must not be used to force compliance or when there is no immediate risk involved, or as a means of punishment

You should record any use of restraint as soon as possible after the incident. This recording should include details of what led to the restraint, the method of restraint used and the outcome, including details of any injuries to the child or yourself.

Recording

All incidents involving physical restraint must be recorded as detailed above.

You will need to exercise your own judgment as to when other forms of control and discipline warrant recording.

Some of the issues you need to take into account include:

- Did the child view the action taken as fair and appropriate?

- Was the action taken discussed with and/or witnessed by others?
- Was the action taken agreed by the Child's Social Worker and/or birth parents?
- Could any other party misconstrue the action taken or view it as inappropriate?

If you are in any doubt about whether any action taken should be recorded or not, then this is probably an indication that it should. In such circumstances you should record the incident and bring it to the attention of the Child's Social Worker at the earliest possible opportunity.

There will on very rare occasions be children who are so out of control that their behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others or major damage to property. In such circumstances you should contact your Supervising Social Worker or, the out of hours social worker.

IDENTITY, RACE, CULTURE AND RELIGION

Valuing Diversity

We recognise that there are groups in society that face disadvantage and discrimination. As an organisation that specialises in providing services to these groups, we will strive to counteract this through a policy of equal opportunities for all in relation to all our activities and services.

Nurture Fostering's Equal Opportunities policy seeks to ensure that, within the framework of the law, no service user receives less favorable treatment on grounds such as gender, marital status, disability, ethnicity, religious beliefs, age, or is otherwise disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified.

We expect all staff and Foster Parents to abide by this policy, but also expect staff and Foster Parents to actively promote equality of opportunity by valuing diversity in all its forms.

You should ensure that children are exposed to experiences that celebrate diversity. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- The provision of appropriate play and reading materials.
- Visits to museums and other appropriate places of interest.
- Encouraging the child to form relationships with a diverse circle of friends.
- Ensuring the avoidance of stereo-typical roles within the fostering household.
- Adults providing a positive role model and demonstrating a value and appreciation of difference.
- Encouraging the child to explore and develop their talents, interests and hobbies.

Race, Culture and Identity

It is a very emotional experience for a child to leave his or her family for whatever reason and be placed in a foster home. All children will be unsettled by the experience and will require patience and a period of time to adjust.

Due consideration of racial origin, culture, religion and language should be the right of every child. We seek therefore to place children with families appropriate to their race and culture. This does not always happen and children are then placed transracially with a foster parent who does not reflect their racial origin.

As racial origin is central to our sense of self and our identity it is important that as a parent you explore and promote the child's sense of identity and address these needs especially for a child who is not of the same race or culture as you:

- Think very carefully before taking responsibility for a child from a different religion, race or culture. How will your family feel? What might the problems be? Will you be able to cope?
- Find out all you can about the child's religion, background, history and culture. Do this with the child if appropriate. Talk to the child's family. Use local libraries and specialist churches
- Remember to concentrate on the fun things as well as serious issues e.g. celebrations, festivals, carnivals, music and restaurants. Talk with the child and her or his parents about what food they like to eat and then find ways of incorporating these foods into family menus. Make sure you have a range of images representing different ethnicities images in your home such as pictures, books and dolls..
- Participate in any training on racial awareness and how discrimination operates. Ask for training from your Supervising Social Worker if it is not offered. Use your support groups to raise and discuss issues. Learn from other foster parents.
- Raise race, culture and religious matters in a proactive and constructive way at the child's review. Ensure that you and Children's Services are attending to the Looked After Child's identity needs.

Racism

Each individual will have a different understanding, awareness and experience of racism. However, as foster parents of ethnic minority children it is important to be able to recognise racism if you are to effectively respond to it for the protection of children. The impact on their lives is dependent on many factors including the level of security and support young people have. Black children also need positive role models to provide valuable guidance, experience and learning for adulthood.

Racial identity is a fundamental aspect of an individual's sense of identity and racism can damage a young person's ability to secure a strong racial identity.

Any incidents of racism directed towards a child in your care or towards yourself by organisations or individuals should be reported to your Supervising Social Worker. This also applies to incidents you are not sure about.

Culture is part of a child's identity and heritage. All foster parents should aim to respect and value a child's cultural heritage. Discrimination does not just mean treating someone differently; it can mean using names or words which seek to put people down. People are not all the same and no one should be discriminated against because of their difference. Children in your household may need help to respect these differences.

Religion

The Children's Act identifies a child's religious upbringing as being of prime importance. The child and their parents have a right to express their views on this. We must always consider these views and meet the child's needs arising from their religious upbringing and background.

Many parents do not state any particular preferences, although it is recognised that many foster parents are regular attendees at religious services and hold strong beliefs.

Whilst religion is an integral part of their family life, it should also be recognised that the children have a right to their own views.

The child's religious background and the needs arising from this should be considered before the child is placed with you. Foster parents are expected to support a child in their own religion and the Placement Agreement and Care Plan should set out who is going to help the child practice their religion.

Sexuality and Sexual Orientation.

Human sexuality is the capacity of humans to have erotic experiences and responses. A person's sexual orientation can influence their sexual interest and attraction for another person. Sexuality may be experienced and expressed in a variety of ways; including thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships. Sexuality also affects and is affected by cultural, political, legal, moral, ethical, and religious aspects of life. No matter how much we might wish it, children and young people are neither ignorant of sexuality and gender nor are they outside of its influence.

Giving children appropriate information, support, and opportunities to ask questions and talk about their thoughts and feelings is better than saying nothing.

It is so easy for silence to lead to kids being confused and feeling ashamed. More opportunities to talk to children and young people is a good thing.

Foster parents should be made aware that children with experience of gender transformation should be treated with extreme sensitivity and they should seek support if necessary.

Language

A child whose first language is not English may be placed with you. Language is an important part of a child's identity and culture. Every effort should be made to preserve a child's linguistic and communication skills, otherwise they may lose a large part of their culture.

You can get support from other foster parents who have knowledge of the language, or use the internet or google translate for translation sites to help you communicate

Names

Names are important as they are a major part of our sense of identity. You need to think carefully about what fostered children should call you. It is not acceptable that a child who has been separated from their parents should call you Mum or Dad. This gives a false impression of the relationship and will usually be seen as threatening by both the child and their parents. The best approach for younger children may be to use the term "Auntie" or "Uncle". For older children the use of your first name may be the most comfortable option.

In any event you need to consider what you feel comfortable with before a child is placed and discuss with the child what is most comfortable for them. In many cultures names are an important aspect of the culture and identity, and many families give their children names that have significance either to the history of the family, circumstances of the child's birth, or events that are of much importance to the family or clan. You should therefore not try to change these names or anglicize them to make it easy for you to pronounce.

It should be borne in mind that a Local Authority cannot decide that a child should be known by a different name or surname or be brought up in a religion other than the one they would have been brought up in had they not become looked after; therefore foster parents must not change a child's name(s) who is placed with them.

Delegated Responsibility

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 provides guidance with respect to the delegation of decision making about Looked After Children to their parents.

In exercising their social services functions, each Local Authority should have a published policy setting out their approach to the delegation of authority to foster parents caring for children the Local Authority is responsible for.

This guidance requires that each Looked After Child's placement plan must make clear who has the authority to take decisions in key areas of the child's day-to-day life, including:

- Medical or dental treatment;
- Education;

- Leisure and home life;
- Faith and religious observance;
- Use of social media; and
- Any other areas of decision-making considered relevant with respect to the particular child.

The SSW is required to complete the Delegated Authority form during Placement Agreement Meeting to provide clarity and expectations on both the child and foster parent.

Types of decision

Decisions about the care of a Looked After Child are likely to fall into three broad areas:

- Day-to-day parenting, e.g. routine decisions about health/hygiene, education, leisure activities;
- Routine but longer term decisions, e.g. school choice;
- Significant events, e.g. surgery.

All decisions in the first category should be delegated to the child's Foster Parents (and/or the child if they can take any of these decisions themselves). Where day-to-day parenting decisions are not delegated to the parents, any exceptions and reasons for this should be set out in the child's placement plan within their care plan.

Sleepovers

The Local Authority has an expectation that Looked After Child will be sleeping in the fostering home in their bed each evening. If the child is sleeping elsewhere for any reason you must inform the Child's Social Worker and your supervising social worker and seek consent for this to be actioned.

Sleepovers or overnight stays are a common experience for most children. There are a number of issues that need to be considered however before agreement is given to a foster child having an overnight stay away from you. The foster parent should be able to exercise reasonable care as they would for their own children.

For a child or young person who is subject to an order placing them in compulsory care, the placement agreement should have made it clear at the time of placement that you have the authority to make the decision. In general the law recognizes that young people acquire more rights and consequently greater self-responsibility as they grow towards adulthood. This means that a young person's age and understanding should be taken into account when deciding on the extent to which the arrangements for an overnight stay should be checked.

However, we are also expected to act in the same way as a good parent would be expected to act and this would be that the arrangements should be confirmed with a

parent or parent of the child's friend regardless of age. Children of any age may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation and it is therefore important that this is gauged for each request and for each occasion. We have an additional responsibility to children looked after which is over and above that of a parent of a child who is not looked after. We must, therefore, check the suitability of the friend and their household by looking at our own records, or by approaching the local Social Services office for the area in which they live.

It is the responsibility of the Child's Social Worker to ensure that this is done and also that the parents of the friend are spoken to and visited. It may be appropriate for you to make this latter contact, in which case the social worker should agree with you who does this.

This and the delay that may be caused may be viewed by the child or young person as a restriction on their freedom and a discrimination done to them by virtue of their care status. This is an unfortunate consequence of the duties laid upon the authority by both the law and the public expectation that children in public care should be protected from harm.

This matter therefore needs to be discussed with children of an age who are likely to want to request an overnight stay, at the start of being looked after. This will help to reduce the disappointment when a last minute request might have to be refused on the grounds that there is insufficient time to make the necessary checks.

There may, however, be situations where you may know the prospective overnight parent very well and can therefore give your Supervising Social Worker detailed and reliable information about their suitability. On such occasions the manager may decide to dispense with any further checks other than parental consultation and a direct confirmation of the arrangements with the other family.

It must be then established that the young person has sufficient personal knowledge and maturity to understand issues of sexual health and safety and that the relationship is one that would be considered by a reasonable parent to be a healthy one for that young person.

The decision to allow a child or young person to stay overnight with a friend should be taken by you (in consultation with your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker wherever possible), following the checks described above.

The Foster Parent may therefore wish to clarify the position regarding overnight stays when discussing the Placement Agreement or at child care reviews.

Holidays

The parent is encouraged to include the child in their family holidays. In some cases they may never have had a holiday. This also makes them feel part of the family and included.

Foster parents are entitled to be supported by Nurture Fostering to provide children and young people the experience of holidays.

Written permission must be sought for all holidays [before booking] from your Supervising Social Worker who will work with the Child's Social Worker who will liaise with the child's birth family if their consent is required. The Child's Social Worker would need to know the venue details, sleeping arrangements and date of the holiday. If considering going abroad check out the child's passport status and in case of unaccompanied minors their entitlement to leave the country

If going abroad you need a letter of consent from the Local Authority's Director of Social Services allowing the child out and back into the country [may be requested at passport control]. If for some reasons the child is not accompanying you on holiday, respite will need to be sought and sufficient notice would need to be given to find appropriate alternative accommodation while you are away.

Pets

If you have pets of your own, your Assessing Social Worker would have discussed with you the implications of this for foster children during your assessment. You will need to consider this again for each child placed. Some children will have had little or no contact with animals and in extreme cases phobia of certain animals may be a reason for not placing a particular child with you.

The care of pets may be beneficial and therapeutic to children and if the child has a pet of their own you may be asked if the child can bring this with them to the placement. During your annual review, your Supervising Social Worker will have to fill out a pet questionnaire that outlines the type, breed, and possible risks of the pet to all members of the household.

Birth Certificates

There may be occasions when your foster child needs a copy of their birth certificate (school applications for example). In the first instance raise this with your Supervising Social Worker who will work with the Child's Social Worker to gain a copy as one is normally held on the child's file. If not the social worker will need to obtain one for you.

Photographs

You will need to be sensitive to the feelings of children and their parents in this area. Many children and adults will object to having their image recorded on film for religious or cultural reasons and their rights should be respected.

In some cases the use of photographs and/or videos will be an important part of the work being undertaken with the child, for example to help prepare an advertisement for a permanent family or as part of life-story work.

In all cases you should discuss the taking of photographs and videos with your Supervising Social Worker. Many school/ nurseries now put the class year photos online. This could be an issue, again check with your Supervising Social Worker child's or see if the school can do the photo but not display it.

The permission of the child should also be sought and no child should be photographed or filmed in the bath, in their night-clothes or underwear or undressed.

No photographs or images of Looked After Children should be put on any form of social media such as your Facebook page etc.

Passports

The foster child may need a passport if you are considering a foreign holiday or they are going on a school holiday. If the child is accommodated this will need to be provided by the child's birth parents. If the child is in care, their social worker will need to make an application for a passport if they do not already have one. This can be a long winded administrative process within the Department for Looked After Children. Don't book a holiday where a passport will be needed until you have the passport.

National Insurance Number

When young people leave school and start work they need their own National Insurance number NI). This is normally sent to the person in receipt of Child Benefit after the young person reaches 15 years of age.

As Child Benefit is not payable for most Looked After Children, this may not happen for your foster child automatically and their social worker may need to make an application on their behalf.

Tattoos and Piercing

It is acknowledged that body piercing and tattoos are forms of self-expression and fashion, and that many children will experiment with them. Tattoos and piercing are commonplace amongst young people and will sometimes be done for cultural reasons. You should not allow any child in your care to have a tattoo or piercing without first discussing this with your Supervising Social Worker and permission may also need to be sought by the birth parents. If the child is accommodated then the parents' wishes must be respected.

Children who express an interest in body piercing or tattoos should be treated on a case by case basis depending on their age and level of understanding, but on principle, foster parents should discourage them, pointing out the possible implications and health care risks; for example, from unsafe materials, needles etc.

Under no circumstances may foster parents encourage or give consent for children to have their bodies pierced or tattooed. Children should be informed that it is illegal for tattooists to tattoo them, even with parental consent. If they appear determined, consideration should be given to making the tattooist aware of the age of the child. If children are likely to use materials to tattoo themselves, consideration should be given to

confiscating them.

If children appear determined to have their bodies pierced, they should be asked to discuss the matter with their parent(s) and social worker beforehand. If they continue to be determined, Foster Parents should ensure that measures used for piercing are as safe and hygienic as possible; preferably undertaken by a reputable person. Piercings may not be undertaken or in any way supported by foster parents. If necessary, foster parents must confiscate any materials or equipment that may be used for it. If a child does allow their body to be pierced or tattooed, the social worker must be informed and asked to decide whether to notify the parents. Occurrences should be noted in the Child's Daily Record.

COMPLAINT AND ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE & NEGLECT AGAINST FOSTER PARENTS

London Child Protection Procedures as amended 2017 and Working Together Agreement 2016.

Allegations or suspicions that a foster parent has caused significant harm to a child will be investigated thoroughly, speedily and sensitively under those procedures and will involve open and honest communication with and support to all those affected.

It is important to note that, although there may be insufficient evidence to support a police prosecution, this does not mean that action cannot be taken to protect a child nor that the termination of a foster parent's approval cannot be considered.

It should also be noted that it may be necessary for the Service to consider, during an investigation, what action, if any, should be taken with regards to other children with whom foster parents under investigation, have contact including their own children.

1: Introduction

The expectations are that:

- a. At the time of a child's placement, Foster Parents will be provided with detailed information as to the child's background and in particular the context of any abusive experiences of and/or previous allegations made by the child;
- b. All Foster Parents will receive preparation, training and guidance to help them provide a safe environment for the child and all members of the foster family;
- c. All Foster Parents will have received information about this procedure and the **London Child Protection Procedures as amended 2017 and Working Together Agreement 2016.**
- d. All Foster Parents will be familiar with and been trained on procedures for recording on a daily basis the progress of children placed with them, including any incidents or complaints, and understand that these procedures have been made to protect all those involved in the child's placement, particularly at times of high stress, and will provide important evidence if an allegation is made.

In addition, in relation to the Fostering Service, it is an expectation of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 that:

- A Manager within the Fostering Service is identified to be the Designated Person who liaises with the LADO in all cases to which this procedure applies and manages the allegations process;
- All staff within the Fostering Service are aware of the requirements of this procedure, including the role of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

2: Procedure

Initial Action

Any person who receives information, complaint or suspects that a child has suffered or is suffering significant harm in a foster placement must immediately inform the Child's Social Worker or the Supervising Social Worker.

On receipt of any such information, the Supervising Social Worker or the relevant Manager must consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to agree whether the following threshold is met:

Standards of Care allegation/complaint;

Serious Standards of Care allegation/complaint; Allegation/complaint requiring LADO's intervention.

Standards of Care allegation/complaint will be managed by the Fostering Service with an outcome that may possibly require a return to the Fostering Panel.

Serious Standards of Care allegation/complaint will require an Initial Evaluation Meeting with the LADO to agree whether a LADO Intervention is necessary and how to take it forward.

Allegation/Complaint requiring a LADO Intervention will be considered as a referral to the LADO.

Referral:

Any allegation(s) that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed requires a referral to the LADO.

The Designated Safeguarding Person is responsible for referring complaints or allegations to the Local Authority Designated Officer. The Local Authority Designated Officer will be available for consultations and support at any stage of the process.

The Designated Person will liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Local Authority Designated Officer to identify who will investigate the allegation or whether the Supervising Social Worker should also act as the Investigating Officer. They will gather relevant background information and liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer in preparation for the Strategy Meeting which should be held within 2 working days of the referral.

Other investigative routes may be identified as more appropriate at this stage, for example, whether the allegation/complaint requires a Section 47 Enquiry.

In exceptional cases where immediate action may be necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child, the Child's Social Worker and his or her manager may decide to liaise with the LADO to request that a new placement be identified.

Pathways following referral to LADO:

- Standards of Care will be managed by Nurture Fostering.
- Standards of Care of a serious nature will be managed via Initial Evaluation Meetings with the LADO.
- All allegations will be managed within Strategy Meetings
- LADO will provide clear indications of time frames for return to panel, and whether annual or extraordinary review is recommended within Strategy Meetings.

3.1 Strategy Meeting

The Strategy Meeting will take place within 2 working days of the referral and will involve a face-to-face meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to decide if an investigation is necessary and, if so, how it should be carried out. The following people will be invited:

- a. The manager of the team undertaking Section 47 enquiry;
- b. The Child's Social Worker and his or her manager;
- c. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- d. The Supervising Social Worker of the foster parent, and his or her manager (who will liaise as necessary with the designated Manager of the Fostering Service);
- e. The police;
- f. Any other agency involved with the child or foster family;

The Strategy Meeting will consider:

- a. The nature of the allegation, its source and reliability;
- b. Background information relating to the foster family, how long the family has been known, how many children have been placed there, the family's known strengths and weaknesses and any exceptional features about the child and the placement;
- c. The involvement of other agencies, for example if the child is there under Staying Put;
- d. The need to inform other agencies who use the foster home e.g. Shared Lives;
- e. A referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service for inclusion on the Children's

Barred List. This should be considered whenever a foster parent is suspended from their duties;

- f. The safety of all children in the household including the foster parent's own children and whether any action is necessary to protect the children including the removal of all or any of the children while the investigation is conducted;
- g. How the needs of any child who has to leave the placement will be met including contact with other children in the placement;
- h. How and by whom the investigation is to be conducted. (It is important that careful consideration is given to the planning of criteria when a joint investigation is recommended. In situations where the police or Crown Prosecution Service recommend no further action then the Supervising Social Worker/Investigating Officer will interview the foster parent about all allegations and concerns. The Record of Investigation must be completed and made available to future meetings and/or the Fostering Panel);
- i. The time-scales for the investigation and any contingencies should timescales prove unlikely to be met;
- j. How the child should be informed of the procedure to be followed and supported through the process;
- k. Whether the alleged perpetrator should be asked to leave the home while the investigation is conducted and confirmation of how the carers will be informed of the allegation;
- l. How to inform the child's parents of the allegation;
- m. Once informed of the decision what support to offer the Foster Parents;
- n. How reports of the investigation will be shared with the Foster Parents and the child or children in the placement;
- o. Whether further placements should be suspended in the meantime;
- p. Arrangements for reconvening the Strategy Meeting.

Whether or not the Strategy Meeting considers that the allegation or suspicion has any foundation, the matter should be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The minutes of the Strategy Meeting must contain clear action points and time-scales for each action. The action points and timescales will be circulated immediately after the meeting. Actions agreed must be recorded and be the responsibility of named individuals.

Copies of the action points and the minutes should be held on the child's and the foster parent's records.

Any decision to take no further action following the Strategy Meeting must be clearly recorded by the decision-maker on the child's and the foster parent's records.

3.2 Investigation and Action

In anticipation of the outcome of the investigation being presented to the Fostering Panel, the Supervising Social Worker or his/her manager should contact the Panel Chair to consider whether a special Panel meeting will be required.

The actions agreed at the Strategy Meeting should be implemented by those responsible within the agreed timescales.

-In planning any investigation (at any stage) Fostering Service will identify whether the allocated Supervising Social Worker is able to support the Foster Parent as well as conduct the investigation based on the unique circumstances of each case and if not, what arrangements will be made to appoint an Investigating Officer to ensure it is completed in a timely manner, and that the Foster Parent continues to be supported by the Fostering Service and/or an Independent Person.

-Fostering Service will use the Record of Investigation, which will also be signed off by the Service Manager before it is provided to the Foster Parent as a record of investigation.

-All verbal feedback from Initial Evaluation Meetings, and Strategy Meetings will be provided by the Supervising Social Worker to the Foster Parent.

-Any limitations to what can be feedback to Foster Parent (for instance if police are still actively investigating) will be discussed within any LADO related meetings.

Outcomes:

-LADO Strategy/Initial Evaluation minutes will not be provided to the Fostering Panel unless they will or are to be provided to the Foster Parents.

-LADO will attend Panel when cases with direct LADO involvement are discussed.

-Any follow on actions from the Fostering Panel such as a referral to DBS, if required, would be made by the Fostering Service led by the LADO in addition to minutes of the Strategy/Evaluation Meeting.

Unless there are circumstances when the details or nature of the allegation cannot be shared immediately, the Foster Parents should be advised of the allegation as agreed at the Strategy Meeting and of the process to be followed in the investigation, including the possibility that an Initial Child Protection Conference may be convened in relation to their own children.

Where considered appropriate by those at the Strategy Meeting, the Foster Parents should be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations before any final decision is made about necessary action to protect the child and other children in the household. Such protective action may include asking the person against whom the allegation has been made to leave the household while the investigation is conducted.

Any decision to suspend further placements with the Foster Parent while the investigation is being conducted should be communicated in writing to the Foster Parent by the Unit Manager of the Supervising Social Worker.

Those supporting the Foster Parents must contact the Foster Parents as soon as practicable after the Foster Parents are made aware of the allegation, and explain their

role to the Foster Parents. They must make clear their responsibility to report to the Local Authority, the Police and in some circumstances to the Court if any information relevant to the investigation comes to their attention. They must inform the Foster Parents on how they will be supported whilst they are under investigation.

All Foster Parents against whom allegations are made and where the child is removed while investigation is being conducted will be paid the reward element of the fostering allowance only if there is no other child in the placement. The full allowance will be reinstated after the investigation and where the child is returned to the household.

If an Initial Child Protection Conference is convened, the Conference Chair must be consulted in advance to discuss whether the Foster Parents should be invited to attend. In any event, the Child Social Worker is to obtain the views of the Foster Parents for and communicated to the Conference.

3.3 Concluding the Investigation

The Strategy Meeting will be reconvened to conclude the investigation. The same people will be invited and the same person will chair the meeting.

The purpose of the final Strategy Meeting is to agree on the outcome of the investigation and responsibilities for any further action including presenting the findings to the Fostering Panel and/or considering whether it may be appropriate to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service for inclusion of the Foster Parents on the Children's Barred List.

Although this will always be envisaged as the final meeting, should new information come to light further actions may be required thereby necessitating the suspension and rescheduling of the meeting.

Prior to Fostering Panel, the Foster Parents and their representative should have seen, and had time to comment on the report being presented to the Panel 28 days before the date of the panel. The procedure to be adopted for the Fostering Panel will be the same as for any other foster parent review - see **Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Parents Procedure**.

All relevant documents in relation to the investigation, whatever the outcome, must be retained on the child's and the foster parent's records, a copy of which should be given to the Foster Parent.

Consideration should be given to holding a debriefing meeting for all involved as to the impact of the allegations and the investigation, whatever the outcome, and any necessary assistance made available.

TERMINATION OF APPROVAL

An approved foster parent can resign at any time by writing a letter to Nurture Fostering giving 28 days' notice. You do not have to give an explanation for resigning but if you have a child in placement there is an expectation that you will not resign until alternative arrangements have been made for a new care arrangement. A foster parent is no longer approved from 28 days after Nurture Fostering has received a letter of resignation.

In some cases, there may be serious concerns regarding the Standards of Care a foster parent is providing, or as a result of an investigation carried out following an allegation or complaint, a report may be submitted to the Fostering Panel, recommending termination of approval.

In some cases the Fostering Panel recommendation or decision by the Agency Decision Maker may terminate your approval. The issues involved in this should not come as a surprise as your Supervising Social Worker would have discussed them with you beforehand. You have a right to attend the Panel, and will be invited to do so. You may also want to put something in writing for the Panel to read and consider.

Usually the Panel will let you know their recommendation immediately. Where this is not possible you will be contacted as soon as possible with the outcome. If you choose not to attend, your Supervising Social Worker will let you know the outcome. You will also be notified in writing of the Agency Decision-Maker's decision within Seven (7) days. If a foster parent does not agree with the decision they have 28 days to appeal to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Foster Parents will be provided with information on how to make an appeal and what support is available to them.

MOVING ON

All foster children and young people will at some point move on. Transition and rehabilitation are usually planned within the care planning and review process giving everyone time to get involved in the transition.

Some moves are unplanned. This can happen when parents decide at short notice to resume the care of their child or where a foster placement breaks down. Even in these situations your Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker will work with you to ensure that there is some limited time for planning in order to avoid moving a child as a result of an emergency.

There are 3 main outcomes for Looked After Children. These are:

- Rehabilitation to family.
- Permanence including long term fostering and adoption.
- Independent Living /Supported living.

REHABILITATION TO FAMILY

Research studies show that the majority of children who become looked after return to family, although there is mixed evidence on how quickly this happens.

Becoming Looked After under Section 20

If the child becomes looked after by the Local Authority under Section 20 of the Children

Act 1989, anyone with parental responsibility can remove the child at any time without the need to give us notice. This is the case even if the person removing the child was not the person who asked for the child to be accommodated. For example, in the case of separated parents, if one parent asked for the child to be accommodated, the other parent could remove the child without the agreement of the first parent.

Young people over the age of 16 years cannot be removed from accommodation if they object. In these circumstances the Local Authority must continue to accommodate the child even though this may be contrary to the wishes of her/his parents.

Care Orders

Children on Care Orders cannot be removed/returned home without the agreement of the Local Authority or on the direction of a court.

In the unlikely event that someone tries to remove a child without informing the Local Authority, the court's agreement, foster parents should immediately alert the Police and the Child's Social Worker or if out of hours, the out of hours team.

Even where the Local Authority (LA) have sought and have been granted a Care Order, it must and will continue to explore the possibility of a child returning home. The LA will continue to work with families after their children come into care in an attempt to achieve the changes necessary to make it safe for the child to return home. If such change can be achieved then the LA would look to return the child home, but in the short term they would remain on a Care Order, allowing the Local Authority to remove the child immediately should the need arise.

In time, if the return home proves successful and the grounds for seeking the Care Order no longer exist, the LA may support an application from the parents to the court for the Order to be revoked.

Even where the LA believes that a child should remain looked after, it is possible for a parent to apply for a Care Order to be revoked. In such cases the court will examine the child's circumstances once again and unless there have been significant changes since the Care Order was first made, is unlikely to revoke the Order.

PERMANENCE

Permanence Planning

Historically many children have drifted into care and there is considerable research evidence that the lack of consistent stable care is one of the major reasons why outcomes for Looked After Children have been so poor.

One of the ways the Government has sought to address this is by requiring that every Looked After Child must have a plan for permanence by the time of their 2 or 4 month

review. This plan must have clear measurable milestones for achieving permanence and must be kept under review.

There are many ways in which the word permanence can be defined and it is recognised that a successful return home is one form of permanence, but it is the options of permanent/long term foster care, Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders and adoption that are being referred to here.

Preparation of a Child for Permanence

Preparation of a child for a move to a permanent family is essential to the positive outcome of that placement. Good preparation for placement should be part of a far broader context of direct work that ideally should be available to the child.

Permanent/Long Term Fostering

Permanent foster care or long term fostering offers placements to children or young people unable to return to their birth families and in need of a permanent substitute family, but where adoption is considered inappropriate.

Permanent or long term foster parents offer a child or young person a home as part of their family until they are able to leave home and live independently.

Residence Orders/Child Arrangement Orders

Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 lays out four orders the Court can make if it is felt to be in the child's best interests. One of these is a Residence Order which settles the arrangements about with whom the child is to live.

Where children are already looked after, the possibility of a Residence Order being used to secure a permanent family placement should be kept under review and this must always be one of the options considered in formulating a child's permanency plan at their second review.

Special Guardianship Orders

A Special Guardianship Order is a permanence option to secure the arrangements for a child with a person or persons who become a child's Special Guardian.

The Order bestows the legal powers and responsibilities of parenting a child to the Special Guardian until that child attains the age of 18 years.

The Order provides legal security for children who can no longer remain in the care of their birth parents. It is an alternative permanence option to adoption which would sever the ties and parental responsibilities with a parent, which may not be appropriate where a degree of attachment has developed between the parent and child; or to a Residence

Order, which determines where a child should live but where parental responsibility is shared equally between parent(s) and those holding the Residence Order.

The Special Guardianship Order enables the guardian to exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others not party to a Special Guardianship Order.

Adoption

Adoption is governed by the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and can be a complicated and lengthy process. The following therefore is a summary of the process from a parent's perspective rather than a full guide to the complexities of adoption.

An Adoption Order is a Court Order that transfers legal responsibility from the child's birth parents to the adoptive parents. Following the making of an Adoption Order, all the rights, duties and responsibilities of the birth parents in relation to the child cease and are assumed by the adoptive parents. Where birth parents refuse to consent to adoption, the Court can dispense with their agreement.

Where a decision has been reached that a child should be placed for adoption, the foster parents looking after the child may be considered alongside other suitable families.

You will need to be prepared for continuing contact with the child's birth family even after an Adoption Order has been made. This is increasingly common and will range from an annual exchange of information via the social worker to face to face contact several times a year. All of this will have been agreed with you in advance of your application for an Adoption Order.

While adoption means that the child is no longer looked after, the LA will continue to offer adoption support services to you and the child through to the child reaching adulthood. This support can include therapeutic services for the child, help in arranging contact and financial support.

INDEPENDENCE/LEAVING CARE AT 18.

Some young people do not return home, and are placed with long term Foster Parents and therefore remain looked after until they reach 18 years of age.

On their 18th birthday the young person is no longer a Looked After Child and your role as a foster parent ends on the day of their 18th birthday. Fostering payments end on that day unless other arrangements have been made prior to the young person becoming 18 years old.

There are 2 options for the young person:

1. To leave your home
2. Stay under a Staying Put Arrangement

The preparation includes the development of the Pathway Plan which commences at 16 and assesses the identified needs of the young person. It is reviewed every 6 months or more often when requested by the young person. The Pathway Plan includes identifying needs around education; training; employment; family and social relationships; accommodation; financial support and health needs.

STAYING PUT ARRANGEMENT

What is a Staying Put Arrangement?

- A Staying Put Arrangement applies to a young person who was looked after immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday as an eligible child; (an eligible child is someone who is aged 16 or 17 and has been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14).

Who is eligible for a Staying Put Arrangement?

- The plan to agree a Staying Put Arrangement will usually be made at the Pathway Plan Review from the age of 16 years onwards, and no later than the young person becoming 17 years and 6 months of age so that the Staying Put Arrangement is in place for the care leaver's 18th birthday. The plan requires the full consent of the young person and of their foster parent, and it also requires the agreement of Children Services; the wishes of the young person and of their foster parent are important, and so too, is the assessment and consent of the local Authority that the arrangement is in the best interests of the care leaver in their transition to independence.

It is not an extended foster placement

- A Staying Put Arrangement is not an extension of the foster placement. Young people aged 18+ are no longer Looked After Children. The fostering regulations and placement plan no longer apply.

This is why the term 'placement' is replaced with the term 'arrangement'. The arrangement is subject to a License Agreement, which sets out what is being provided. The arrangement is similar to that between a lodger, and their landlord.

Can it be cancelled by any of the parties?

- Yes, cancellation of the Staying Put Arrangement may be initiated by the care leaver, or the foster parent if the arrangement is not working for them or if circumstances change. The social worker/ personal advisor may cancel the arrangement if the assessed needs of the care leaver no longer warrant the arrangement as being in the care leaver's best interests.

How long can the Staying Put Arrangement last?

- A Staying Put Arrangement cannot extend beyond the care leaver's 21st birthday, but the length of duration before this will be determined by the care leaver's needs and the Pathway Plan review. If the care leaver should leave the Staying Put Arrangement to live elsewhere then the Arrangement is terminated and no further Arrangement can be entered into.

I am a foster parent, can I still foster other children?

- Yes you can continue to foster other children and we value your skills and experience as a parent. It is a legal requirement for the Fostering Service to assess your suitability to continue to foster other children now that you have an adult living in your home under the Staying Put Arrangement.

Will the care leaver need a DBS if I am fostering children?

- Yes a Disclosure & Baring Service (DBS) Certificate will be compulsory for Staying Put Arrangements where other Looked After Child/Children are living under a fostering placement. The Supervising Social Worker for the foster parent will make arrangements to ensure that a DBS check is undertaken for the care leaver who is remaining under a Staying Put arrangement in the fostering household.

Other young people will move on to live independently, either through their own choice or because you do not wish to provide an after care placement. There are a wide range of semi-independent and independent options, ranging from supported lodgings, which can provide a similar level of support to the young person as a foster placement, through to private or social housing tenancies where the young person lives independently.

Impact on the Fostering Family

While the focus is rightly on the child or young person leaving your home and how it will affect them, ending of placements can be as traumatic for the Foster Parent and siblings as well as the young person.

Time should be taken by the foster parent and their partners to consider the impact it will have on all the family members when a fostered child or young person leaves your home positively or negatively. Discuss your feelings amongst the family members and your Supervising Social Worker.

MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

Many foster parents find that they have ongoing contact with children they have looked after. This can depend on the length of the placement and quality of the relationship but even where children have only been with you for a short period of time, you may find that they wish to maintain contact with you or even re-establish contact after a number of years.

It is important for all of us to know and understand how we became the people we are. Most of us have the advantage of being able to call on family and friends to tell us what we were like as a child or to discuss shared memories. This is not always possible for children who have been looked after and they may feel the need to contact you to fill in some of these gaps.

Younger children who have moved on to permanent placement may need the reassurance of ongoing contact with you to help them settle into their new placement. Children sometimes need to know that it is okay with you to attach to their new parents. It is important that children moving on to permanent placements do not feel that they have been rejected by you or that you have completely disappeared from their life. There is a balance to be struck in such cases as too much contact with you, particularly in the early days of permanent placements, can undermine the relationship with the new parents and make it harder for the child to settle with them.

With other children it might simply be the case that you have both established a positive and lasting friendship and wish to maintain contact with each other. Adoptive placements are meant to be relationships for life, but you will find that some foster placements may also lead to lifelong friendship.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Carers Lewisham

Waldram Place
Forest Hill
London
SE23 2LB
0208 699 8686
<http://www.carerslewisham.org.uk/>

Coram Children's Legal Centre

48 Mecklenburgh Square
London
WC1N 2QA
020 7713 0089

Childline

0800 1111

Lewisham community support service & peer support

91 Granville Park

Lewisham

SE13 7DW

020 3228 0760

Call your GP or dial 111

Call the samaritans for free on 116 123 (UK only) or email: jo@samaritans.org

Citizens advice bureau

Leemore Community Hub

Bonfield Road

Lewisham

SE13 5EU

www.lewishamcab.org.uk

Community Mediation – Bromley BCMS (Bromley Community Mediation Service)

The Stables

1, North Street

Bromley, BR1 1SD

United Kingdom

020 8249 7954

enquiries@bcms-org.uk

Refuge – For Women And Children Against Domestic Violence

Please call the freephone 24 hour national domestic violence helpline, run in partnership between refuge and women's aid, on 0808 2000 247 or email helpline@refuge.org.uk.

Lewisham Victim Support

300 Sangley Road

Catford

SE6 2JT

020 8698 4583

enquiries@victimsupport-lewisham.org.uk

Young Lewisham Project

124 Kilmore Road
Forest Hill
London
SE23 2SR
Tel: 0208 291 9771

The young Lewisham project supports young people to become active citizens, take self-responsibility, to learn about the local community, how to improve their our own surroundings and to link with other provision within the borough.

Fostertalk

Foster talk is an independent, non-profit organisation providing professional support services to Foster Parents across the UK.

10 the Courtyard
Buntsford Gate
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire
B60 3DJ
08000407675

enquiries@fostertalk.org

Kaleidoscope Child Development Centre

32 Rushey Green
SE6 4JF
020 3049 1475

Refugee Council

0207 346 6700.
Own language telephone advice service: 0808 808 2255

Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network

The Sayes Court Clubroom,
341 Evelyn Street,
London,
SE8 5QX
0208 694 0323

NSPCC

Call Childline on 0800 1111 (for children)
0808 800 5000

South London Counselling Services

0208 852 3400
07957 630 187
info@slcservices.org

Metro Greenwich

141 Greenwich High Road
London
SE10 8JA

We provide health, community and youth services across London and the South East for anyone experiencing issues around sexuality, gender, equality, diversity or identity

The London LGBT Voluntary Service

Unit 1 10-11 Archer Street
Soho
London
W1D 7AZ
0207 437 6063

Website: www.kairosinsoho.org.uk

Family lives London and the Southern Home Counties:

0208 663 5653
C/O Carers Information Service,
24 George Street,
Croydon
CR0 1PB
Email: familysupport@familylives.org.uk

Provides support for parents on any family issue. Offers free parentline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Also offers support via online chat, skype, email and textphone

Samaritans of Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark Samaritans

1-5 Angus Street,
London,
SE14 6LU
020 86925228 (local call charges apply)
National telephone:
116 123 (this number is free to call)

Lewisham Somali Community Organisation

Etta Community Hall
Gosterwood Street
London
SE8 5PB
020 8694 6065
musajama2000@yahoo.co.uk

The National Aids Helpline

0800 567 123. For speakers of other languages, 0800 717 2227

The Children's Trust

Tadworth court,
Tadworth,
Surrey,
KT20 5RU
Care, education, therapy and rehabilitation for children with multiple disabilities
01737 365 000

Youth Offending Service

9 Holbeach Road
SE6 4TW
020 8314 7474
Email: yos@lewisham.gov.uk

National Autistic Society

Helpline 0808 800 4104
Supporter 0800 800 1050
<http://www.autism.org.uk>

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.corambaaf.org.uk

www.dfes.gov.uk

www.fostertalk.org

www.london.gov.uk/younglondon/kids

www.londonkidz.com