

## **Guidance notes for completing Foster Carer Report for LAC Review.**

### **Introduction**

The Foster care report can play an important part of children's Looked after children's reviews. Foster carers often have significant insights into a child's experience of the world and understand what is working well or not working well. Foster carer's experiences of caring for a child and their observations can contribute significantly to care planning and the report is a good place to capture and share this information with professionals involved.

In future years, if a child wishes to see their file, the foster carers report is another way of recording information about their life and this may be valuable for their identity.

The Foster carers report is an opportunity to professionalise the role of the foster carer and provides a positive platform for sharing views, evidencing the positive outcomes achieved by quality family care provision and raise any concerns, risks, or vulnerabilities that our looked after child may be experiencing in placement.

The report can be completed by foster carers with their Supervising social worker if that is helpful. It is important that the positive features of a child's behaviour are described alongside any concerns and this balanced picture will assist the independent reviewing officer to gain a robust insight into the lived experience of our looked after children.

Each section can be completed and there is guidance to help you think about what issues can be included. You may have other things you wish to include as well as the guidance below.

### **Summary**

This is the place to write an overall picture of how you think the child has been in placement. You will be writing the detail in each section so this is the condensed version of your thoughts about how the child is doing and progressing in your care.

### **Positive Progress**

This is an opportunity to explain how you feel the child is making progress in your care. What may be a small event to others may be really be significant for a looked after child so take time to explain even the smallest positive changes i.e. sitting to the table, cleaning their own teeth, concentrating for longer periods, making friends, and keeping them. You can write about what you have done to help bring about this progress.

Things to think about might include.

- Changes in behaviour

- Self-care skills
- Social skills, making friends etc.
- Managing and achieving in school
- Hobbies, interests, and new skills
- Getting on with others in the fostering household
- General health issues and wellbeing.
- Ways a child is showing resilience.

### **Concerns, Incidents, Risks.**

This is an opportunity to explain the things you may be worried about. There may have been incidents that have happened that are worrying and these can be explained here.

You may feel that there are risks which potentially may be harmful to the child. An example may be that the child is spending too long in their room on internet or that the child appears to be eating less than normal.

Things to think about might include.

- Any incidents that have happened since the last review
- Behaviours with other children
- Behaviour in the community
- Self-esteem and identity
- Relationships with foster carers and others in the household
- Use of mobile phones, social media
- Life story issues

### **Safeguarding – keeping safe.**

This is an opportunity to talk about any concerns you have that a child may not be safe. You may want to explain what you are doing to try and keep the child safe.

It may be that a child is challenging in their behaviour and this is difficult to manage and you can explain how this behaviour may be putting the child at risk.

If there are safe care plans in place – discuss these here or if you feel a joint safe care risk assessment and plan needs to be done, you can explain this here.

Things to think about might include.

- Use of social media
- Behaviour in the community/school environment
- Self-care
- Managing behaviour
- Relationships with friends and other young people
- Adherence to family rules
- Emotional wellbeing
- Relationships with others in fostering household

- Self-harming behaviours

### **Relationships with others in the household**

This is an opportunity to describe how a child may present differently and have different relationships with others in the household. Depending on past experience a child may relate differently to male and female foster carers or to birth children and, or other looked after children in the household. There may be positive relationships that can be described or vulnerabilities observed that can be described in this section. You may describe strategies you are using to manage any concerns and how effective these are.

Things to think about might include.

- The way a child relates to different foster carers.
- Relationship with birth children/carers grandchildren
- Relationship with other looked after children
- The way a child responds to visitors to household.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Here you can talk about any actions or issues that arose from the Initial health assessment. If there are any health issues that need to be explained you can write them here. Please write dates of dental and optician appointments and any medications that the child is taking. Detail any health diagnosis and any treatment plans.

Things to think about might include.

- How a child/young person presents.
- Eating, drinking, sleeping issues
- Adherence to prescribed medication/treatment.
- Drug or alcohol issues.
- How a child/YP keeps themselves safe
- Understanding of health and hygiene
- Self-harming behaviours

### **Education**

It is important that our looked after children are given every opportunity to achieve positive outcomes in all areas. Helping them learn and develop is an important part of foster care and this is an opportunity to describe how a child is coping with school and developing in their learning. Additionally, attending school is important to develop social skills and this can often be an area that is challenging for looked after children.

Foster carers can detail the date of the last PEP meeting, whether they attended and progress on actions identified.

**Things to think about may include.**

- Developmental educational targets and how a child is reaching them.
- Any learning needs identified.
- Strategies you are using at home to help learning.
- Relationship with school staff
- Behaviour in school and following rules
- Relationships with friends and others in school

**Contact/Communication with birth family.**

Our looked after children often find it hard to manage the complexity of living with foster carers and having a relationship with birth family. This can be extremely challenging for them and in this section, foster carers can comment on how our looked after child is managing with contact and communication with birth family and the impact on them of this on a day to day basis. It may be difficult to write about this and your Supervising social worker can assist. If there are any concerns about how the information is to be shared in the review, your SSW can discuss with the IRO prior to the review.

**Things to think about may include.**

- How a child behaves before and after contact
- Impact on wellbeing of contact
- Contact arrangements, frequency, location etc. and how well these are working.
- Any concerns or risks regarding contact
- Positives about contacts and communication with birth family
- Communication between foster carers and birth family

**Social skills/Independence**

In this section the foster carer can describe how a child presents socially and give examples of any progress or concerns. It is important that our looked after children get opportunities to develop independence skills and these can be provided in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Foster carers can give examples of how they have helped children and young people develop new skills and abilities both socially and in their independence skills.

**Things to think about may include.**

- What has changed for the child since the last review socially?
- Any new areas of skill or ability that a child has developed or areas of change that you think need to change and what strategies you are using to support positive progress.
- Differences in behaviour in placement, school, and community
- Whether a child is developing skills in line with developmental stages.
- Have you got, or do you need delegated authority?

### **Practical Issues/Support needs**

This section is an opportunity to think about whether there are any practical issues or support needs either the child or you as a foster carer may have to support progress. This may be considered in supervision with your Supervising social worker and explained here but needs to relate to the needs of the child.

Things to think about may include.

- School arrangements – travel and distance
- Equipment required for hobbies/interests.
- Respite or supportive respite required to sustain placement.
- School uniform/general clothing
- Contact arrangements.

### **Working together**

This is an opportunity to describe how the professional team around the child is working. There may be positive features and or, concerns. These need to be presented in a constructive way in the report so that, if necessary, the IRO can give these matters thought and direction in recommendations.

If you think there is any information that you need to know that you haven't been given, you could include this here.

The team around the child may include social workers, Teachers, Medical staff, CAMHS, Horizons, Supervising social workers etc.

### **Things to think about may include.**

- Are Statutory social work visits being completed and is the child being seen?
- Do you feel the social worker is listening to your views?
- Are you being consulted?
- Do you feel the child is receiving the support and help required by professionals?
- Do you feel school staff work well with you?
- Are there any barriers to effective working together?

### **Future planning for young people**

This section can be used if you are looking after a young person who is over 16-17 years. It is an opportunity to write about how the planning for the young person's future is working out and how the young person is engaging with planning for their future.

### **You might want to consider.**

- Are you aware of the Pathway plan?

CONTROLLED

- How independent the young person currently is i.e. budgeting, practical skills, form filling etc.
- What skills they may need to work on
- Any concerns or issues you have in relation to their future.
- If Staying Put is an option that has been discussed and considered by you

### **Conclusion**

There are a lot of things listed here that you may want to think about when writing the report. **You don't have to write about everything and the report doesn't have to be lengthy.**

If you talk about this report with your Supervising social worker in the days leading up to the review and in your visits, the report can be completed together if this would be helpful.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the report. It will help the Independent Reviewing officer get a really good, detailed understanding of life lived by the child in your care and present them with an opportunity to consider any concerns you may have.

The report will also present significant and important information about the progress you are helping children in your care to achieve. It will provide lots of information for professionals that may help them make plans to support good outcomes for our looked after children.

Thank you!