

Foster carer
records and
recording

31 January

2015

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Standard 25. National Minimum Standards.

1.0 General

1.1 Fostering Services are required under Regulation 30 Fostering Service Regulations 2011 to keep a record of each child placed with foster carer detailing:

- The date of placement
- The child's address prior to placement
- The legal status of the child
- The name and address of the foster carer
- The date when the placement ended
- The child's address on leaving the placement.

Regulation 36 also requires that a record is kept of all accidents occurring to children whilst placed with foster carers. This is done by foster carers completing an Accident, Injuries and Illness Form which is sent to the Supervising Social Worker and collated by the Fostering Service.

1.2 Regulation 30 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 requires that a case record is established for each foster carer containing all the documents and information specified in the Regulations.

1.3 The Directorate's **Recording Policy** applies to all Fostering Service staff.

2.0 Confidentiality

2.1 All foster carer records are maintained on the Directorate's electronic database – Carefirst and on Civica. Only staff employed by the Authority are authorised to access electronic data stored on the Authority's databases. Any confidential information stored on computer is password protected.

2.2 All staff should observe the confidentiality guidance outlined in the Caldecott Guidelines.

2.3 Foster carers must confirm in writing as part of the Foster Care Agreement that:

- They will keep all information confidential.
- They will store all confidential information in a secure location.
- They will return all the information to the agency if requested to do so.

2.4 Before appointing Panel members, the agency will inform them in writing of the confidentiality agreements applying to fostering work. Prospective Panel members will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement before being appointed.

2.5 Whenever it is necessary to send any part of a Fostering Case File by post, either within or outside the Council, the information should be delivered personally wherever possible or placed in a sealed plain envelope and marked '**PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL**'. When the external post is necessary, then arrangements must be made for copies of relevant documents to be sent by recorded delivery.

3.0 Foster carers record

3.1 When applicants commence the assessment process a case file should be established.

3.2 **The Case File should contain:**

Basic Information

- Initial Enquiry Form
- Expression of Interest
- Screening Visit Record
- Application
- Carers Consent Form
- General admin/Movement/Closure
- Chronology of accidents occurring to children, allegations and complaints relating to the placements

Case Records

- Observation Records
- Supervision of Foster Carers Forms
- Management Decision Records
- File Audit documents

Reviews

- Annual Review of Foster Carers
- Disruption Meetings
- Associated correspondence, notifications and reports

Training

- Formal Training Evaluation Report
- Course Attendance Record

Checks and References

- Record of DBS checks
- Statutory Checks
- LA Information
- Health and Safety Checklist
- Dog Owners Assessment
- References

Medical

- Medical Consents
- Medical Advisors Report
- Psychological and Specialist Reports

Approval Documents

- Form F or Fostering network Assessment form
- Matching Meeting Minutes
- Panel Minutes
- Letters/notifications linked to approval/matching process
- Exemptions
- Foster Carer Agreements including Confidentiality Agreement
- Safer Care Policy
- Letters/notifications linked to resignation/termination

Legal

- Statements of Evidence
- Notifications/Legal correspondence
- Interagency Forms
- Representations
- Court Orders

Correspondence

- General Letters
- Proposed/Actual Placement Letters

Restricted Access

- 3rd Party Information
- Written legal advice
- Information without permission to disclose
- Allegations/Complaints
- Strategy Meetings

3.3 The Fostering Service Social Worker is responsible for establishing and maintaining the file.

3.4 The location of any information which cannot be stored on the foster carer case file because of its format e.g. story book or audio-visual, should be noted on the case file.

4.0 Storage

4.1 All foster care records should be kept securely in a lockable cabinet and protected from the risk of damage by fire or water.

- 4.2 Foster carer files will be kept for 35 years from the date of closure and for at least 10 years after their death or the refusal/ withdrawal of their application to be a foster carer.
- 4.3 All closed paper files are kept at the Woolston Depot, off Manchester Road, Warrington.
- 4.4 Closed electronic records are located in CareStore.
- 4.5 Directorate personnel records pertaining to fostering staff are stored securely in Human Resources and relevant documentation pertaining to fostering staff is kept in individual staff supervision files which are stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet within the Fostering Service office.
- 4.6 Personnel records pertaining to Panel members are kept by the Panel administrator and stored in lockable filing cabinets in the Fostering Service office.
- 4.7 The foster carer should adhere to Warrington Fostering Service confidentiality statement and foster carer agreement.

5.0 Access to Files

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Service users and members of the public are allowed to see any records the Directorate holds about them under the Data Protection Act 1998. Requests must be in writing and responded to within 40 days.

Any disclosure of information is subject to a confidentiality agreement.

- 5.1 Foster Carers
- 5.2 A foster carer may have access to all parts of their file except those deemed to be confidential under the Council's Access to Records Policy. This includes Foster Panel minutes with the consent of the Panel Chair and Panel members.
- 5.3 A request for access will be directed through the Duty and Assessment Team, recorded on an Initial Contact Record and an activity then generated for Principal Managers clipboard of an Access to Records Request
- 5.4 Staff and Local Authorities

5.5 From time to time access to the Council's foster carer case records may be requested by:

- Directorate Management
- Directorate staff
- Local Authorities making enquiries about prospective foster carers
- Those holding an inquiry under section 81 of the 1989 Act (inquiries) or section 17 of the Act (inquiries) for the purposes of such an inquiry
- The Secretary of State
- The registration authority
- The Commission for Local Administration in England, for the purposes of any investigation conducted in accordance with Part 3 of the Local Government Act 1974
- A court having power to make an order under the Children Act 1989 or a guardian acting for the child in proceeding
- Any person appointed by the agency for the consideration of any representations (including complaints).

5.6 In most circumstances information from case records should only be provided if the subject of the enquiry has provided written consent to the enquiring agency for the information to be disclosed.

5.7 Information provided in response to statutory enquiries from other agencies must be approved by the Principal Manager. If the name of any person other than the subject of the enquiry is to be disclosed within this information, consultation must first take place with a Senior Manager/Legal Services. This applies whether a third party is a child or an adult.

5.8 A record is kept on Carefirst of any access provided to a foster carer file or any information disclosed.

5.9 Any person, other than the foster carer, accessing foster carer case records or the information contained within them, should first give agreement in writing to keep the records safe and the contents confidential.

6.0 Auditing

6.1 It is the Principal/Practice Manager's responsibility to audit case files in line with Children and Young People's Targeted Services case recording policy.

7.0 Records held by Foster Carers

7.1 The following records are held/maintained by foster carers:

- **Foster Carer's Event Diary:** Record of any significant events, including any sanctions and restraints. All interventions and sanctions should be recorded. If an incident has occurred which was both unpredicted and involved the need for physical restraint, or it was necessary to call the police the carer should inform Out of Hours if outside of normal working hours and the child's social worker and the fostering supervising social worker as soon as possible. A detailed record of the circumstances leading to this, action taken and outcomes, needs to be completed by the foster carer
- **Child's Personal Health Record:** When a child under 5 years is placed, they will already have a 'Child Personal Health Record'. If the foster child moves to another care placement, or to adoptive carers, the record must be passed to the new carers or returned to the birth parents if the child returns home.
- **Carer's Contact Record:** Records information related to the child's contact with birth family and others.
- **Accident, Injuries and Illness Form:** Records details of any accidents, injuries, illness and actions taken in respect of them.
- **CIC Documentation:** Background Information Record, Placement Information Record, Care Plan, Reviews.

8.0 Record storage in the foster home

8.1 Documentation Files are issued by the Fostering Service to foster carers. These are lockable metal boxes and contain a checklist of documents the foster carer should hold in respect of the child.

8.2 Foster carer's paperwork regarding children they foster must be kept confidential and be stored in the secure, locked container provided. There should be separate records for each child placed.

8.3 If the child moves to another placement or returns home, all the documents must be returned to the child's Social Worker and/or Supervising Social Worker.