



Fostering A

-

Z survival guide



**Fostering**

**A-Z**

Document Control

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**Fostering Services – the legal context**

The National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services. Ofsted regularly inspects all fostering agencies to ensure that these standards are being met. Ofsted requires all Foster Carers to cooperate reasonably and to allow themselves to be interviewed and visited. Every Fostering Service is required to have a clear Statement of Purpose which spells out its aims and objectives and lists the services facilities that are provided. This includes any provision for family and friends foster carers and for Parent and Child Arrangements.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/contents/made>

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274220/Children_Act_1989_fostering_services.pdf>

**What are the National Minimum Standards?**

The development of the National Minimum Standards for foster care are among a number of national initiatives designed to produce better outcomes for children and young people cared for away from home.

STANDARDS:

1. **The child’s wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them** • Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are considered in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint. • The views of others with an important relationship to the child are gathered and taken into account.

**2. Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care** • Children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

**3. Promoting positive behaviour and relationships** • Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.

**4. Safeguarding children** • Children feel safe and are safe. • Children understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm including neglect, abuse, and accident.

 **5. Children missing from care** • Children who go missing from foster placements are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return.

**6. Promoting good health and wellbeing** • Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.

 **7. Leisure activities** • Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities. • Children are able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community.

**8. Promoting educational attainment •** The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.

 **9. Promoting and Supporting** - Family Time • Children have, where appropriate, constructive family time with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half siblings, wider family, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives.

**10.Providing a suitable physical environment for the child in care •** Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

 **11.Preparation for a placement** • Children will be provided with a profile in respect of their prospective carer wherever appropriate prior to the placement commencing. Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued. • Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer’s own children living in the household. The child’s needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement.

**12.Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care** • Children are prepared for and supported into adulthood so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic wellbeing. Foster Carers who offer placements to young people aged 13+ are provided with guidance and support in order to prepare young people in their transitions to adulthood.

**13.Recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of children and young people in care** • The Fostering Service recruits, assesses and supports a range of foster carers to meet the needs of children they provide care for and is proactive in assessing current and future needs of children.

**14.Foster Care Panels and the Fostering Service’s Agency Decision Maker •** The Foster Care Panel and Agency Decision Maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care.

**15.Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs** • The responsible authority has information and support from the fostering service, which it needs to facilitate an appropriate match between the carer and child; capable of meeting the child’s needs and consistent with the wishes and feelings of the child and therefore maximising the likelihood of a stable placement.

**16.Statement of purpose and children’s guide** • Children, their parents, foster carers, staff and the responsible/placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and what services and facilities it provides. • The Fostering Service’s operation meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose.

 **17.Fitness to provide or manage the administration of a fostering service** • The Fostering Service is provided and managed by those who are suitable to work with children and have the Newcastle City Council Foster Carer Handbook and the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications to deliver an efficient and effective service.

**18.Financial viability and changes affecting business continuity**

• The Fostering Service is financially sound.

• Where a service is to close or substantially change there is proper planning to make the transition for children, foster carers, and staff as smooth as possible.

**19.Suitability to work with children** • There is careful selection of staff, fostering households, volunteers and the central list of persons considered suitable to be members of a Foster Care Panel and there is monitoring of such people to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm children.

**20.Learning and development of foster carers**

• Foster carers receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively.

 • A clear framework of training and development is in place. Following approval, each carer will complete a Personal Professional Development Plan (PPDP) with their Supervising Social Worker. The PPDP will need to be completed on each carer in the household. The PPDP will be used as the basis for assessing the carers’ performance and identifying their training and development needs based on the needs of the children they are caring for. The PPDP will then be reviewed at each foster carer annual review.

**21.Supervision and support of foster carers** • Foster carers receive the support and supervision they need in order to care properly for children placed with them.

 **22.Handling allegations and suspicions of harm** • Allegations and suspicions of harm are handled in a way that provides effective protection and support for children and the person making the allegation and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

 **23.Learning, development and qualifications of staff** • Children and foster carers receive a service from staff, volunteers and Foster Care Panel members and decision makers who have the competence to meet their needs.

**24.Staff support and supervision** • Staff and volunteers are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high-quality service to children.

**25.Managing effectively and efficiently and monitoring the service** • The Fostering Service is managed ethically, effectively and efficiently, delivering a service which meets the needs of its users.

**26.Records** • Records are clear, up to date, stored securely and contribute to an understanding of the child’s life.

**27.Fitness of premises for use as Fostering Service** • The premises and administrative systems are suitable to enable the service to meet the objectives of its Statement of Purpose.

**28.Payment to carers** • Payments to foster carers are fair and paid in a timely way. • Foster carers are clear about the Fostering Service’s payment structures and the payments due to them.

 **29.Notification of significant events** • All significant events relating to the health and protection of children in fostering placements are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities.

**30.Family and Friends/Connected Person Foster Carer** • Family and Friends foster carers receive the support they require to meet the needs of children placed with them.

**31.Placement Plan and Review** • Children are cared for in line with their Placement Plan/Short Break Care Plan. • The Fostering Service takes action to chase up outstanding reviews or visits from the responsible authority, contributes to those reviews and assists the child to contribute to their reviews.

**A**

# Accidents / Illness / Hospitalisation

If a child/young person is involved in any accident or incident, foster carers have a duty to report the accident/incident in line with the Accident / Incident Policy.

Should the child/young person's injury be more serious or a sudden illness that requires medical or hospital treatment, foster carers’ priority is to obtain medical treatment for the child.

Once urgent medical attention has been given to the child/young person, foster carers must inform the child's social worker or, if out of hours, Emergency Duty Team (EDT) as soon as possible. Foster carers should also complete an Accident /Incident form and submit it to the Fostering Duty Team.

A Child In Our Care will need someone to sign consent for them to have any planned invasive treatment or require an anaesthetic. Foster carers cannot give medical consent unless this has been explicitly delegated to them during the placement planning meeting. Where carers need consent, they will need to speak with the child’s social worker or EDT who can seek this either from parents or a Senior Manager. Medical staff will know what to do once they know the child is a Child in Our Care and attending with their foster carer. In a real emergency, doctors will act first and seek signatures later.

## Emergency Duty Team -  01642 524552

|  |
| --- |
|  Refer to: * Criteria for completing an incident report form.
* Incident Form
 |

# Advocacy

All children in our care should be aware that they can request the services of an advocate to help them to get their wishes and feelings communicated within meetings. Advocates are independent of the local authority. Redcar and Cleveland have an arrangement with NYAS to provide this service

Refer to:

[The National Youth Advocacy Service | NYAS](https://www.nyas.net/)

# Allegations

Sometimes Children in Our Care make allegations against their foster carers or a member of the foster carers’ family. In the event of an allegation being made the local authority has a process to follow in order to investigate the allegation. Foster carers, who are the subject of an allegation, will be offered independent advice and support from Foster Talk. <https://www.fostertalk.org/>

Following an allegation being investigated it is normal practice for a Foster Carer Review to he held so that the outcome of the investigation can be explored and any changes to carer’s terms of approval considered.

Refer to: Allegations Against Foster Carer Policy

[Facing an Allegation | Fosterline](https://www.fosterline.info/already-fostering/facing-an-allegation/)

FosterTalk: [Guide to AST referral - FosterTalk](https://www.fostertalk.org/guide-to-ast-referral/)

See also: Complaints – about foster carers

**Appropriate Adult**

Where young people under the age of 18 are arrested in connection with a suspected criminal offence, the police are required to interview young people in the presence of an Appropriate Adult. This is a requirement in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. An appropriate adult can be a social worker or in some circumstances foster carers may be asked to undertake this role. Appropriate adults are there to consider the welfare of the young person while they are in the police station and being interviewed. The Appropriate Adult’s role is not to provide legal advice – and children and young people should have access to a solicitor when being interviewed.

 **B**

**Babysitting- See Support Care**

**Black and Minority Ethnic Children and Young People (B.A.M.E)**

Carers of black and minority ethnic children need to consider whether children may need any specific skin or hair care products, and explore the availability of hairdressers and barbers with expertise in relation to specific hair types/styles. It is also crucial that foster carers are provided with information regarding any wider cultural or religious needs, including dietary requirements. There are a number of useful publications referenced below which can provide guidance around caring for black and minority ethnic children.

Where children’s first language is not English, it is important that carers are supported to identify appropriate means of communication while children learn English.

Refer to:

[Fosterline\_Caring-for-Black-and-Mixed-Heritage-Children-1.pdf](https://www.fosterline.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Fosterline_Caring-for-Black-and-Mixed-Heritage-Children-1.pdf)

[Caring for Muslim Children - Basic Requirements for Muslims | Fosterline](https://www.fosterline.info/resource/caring-for-muslim-children-basic-requirements-for-muslims/)

[Factsheets Archives | Page 2 of 2 | Fosterline](https://www.fosterline.info/resource-category/factsheets/page/2/)

# Belongings/ Personal Possessions

A child may bring with them belongings to the foster carers home which may seem of little or no value, but to the child may be precious and priceless and therefore should be treated with respect.

Foster carers should not be in too much of a hurry to wash everything that children and young people bring; the familiar smell of home may be a great comfort and help children to settle more easily.

Any possessions children acquire, such as gifts and clothes etc., whilst in foster carers’ homes, are the belongings of the child and should move with them when they leave — wherever children move on to. When children move on, they should take their clothes and other belongings in suitcases or holdalls and not in black plastic bags or supermarkets plastic bags. **If a child is placed with you does not have a luggage bag or suitcase, the fostering service expects foster carers to purchase a luggae bag (s) and/ or suitcase (s) using the child’s allowance.**

# Birth Certificate

If a copy of the child's birth certificate is required, e.g. for passport applications, carers should seek advice from the child's social worker. Birth certificates should be returned to the children’s social worker for inclusion in the child's file.

# Buddying Scheme & Mentoring

Most foster carers derive great satisfaction from their role (Sinclair et al., 2004); yet the day-to-day experiences of foster carers leave them vulnerable to elevated levels of stress (Cole and Eamon, 2007; Farmer et al., 2005; Sinclair et al., 2004). Cumulative stressors (e.g. a child’s challenging behaviour) can be damaging for the well-being of carers and the children they look after, as well as the stability of placements and the retention of carers within the system. If not managed appropriately, carers’ responses to these stressors can be transmitted to the young people in their care (Farmer et al., 2005), potentially making them feel that their needs are secondary to those of others. Support systems that extend beyond the more formal relationship between carer and supervising social worker are promoted to alleviate carers’ stress and thereby potentially improving outcomes

Redcar and Cleveland’s buddying scheme is based upon peer mentoring. Peer mentoring is delivered by a more experienced foster carer (the mentor) to a less experienced foster carer (the mentee). Mentors offer non-judgmental support from a position of understanding as foster carers themselves.

If a foster carer wishes to be assigned a ‘buddy’, they should speak to their Supervising Social Worker.

**Bullying and Harassment.**

Whilst there is no legal definition of the word ‘bullying’ it is usually defined as a repeated behaviour that is intended to hurt someone either emotionally or physically. Bullying can take many forms, including: physical assault, social bullying, threatening behaviour, name calling, malicious communications, cyber bullying and spreaind untrue and unkind rumours / gossip about someone.

Harassment is an unwanted behaviour which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. Examples of harassment include: spoken or written abuse, offensive communication, images and graffiti, physical genstures, facial expressions and ‘jokes’.

Harassment is unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2020 if it is because of, or is linked to: age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. The Equality Act refers to these as **protected characteristics.**

Redcar & Cleveland Fostering Service regards its foster carers as members of the Children’s Workforce and is therefore committed to upholding the above principles in regard to the way that our foster carers are treated, both by the Fostering Service and its partners. We also expect that foster carers will uphold strong anti-bullying and harassment standards regarding the children and young people that they care for and people that they come in to contact with through the course of their role.

Refer to: **Anti Bullying Policy**

ChildLine has special pages on bullying and how to combat it at::

 <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/>

**C**

**Care leavers** – Leaving Care/TARGET Leaving Care Services

# Changes in Circumstances of foster carers

When there are any significant changes in the foster home, e.g. somebody moves in or out, illnesses, bereavement or health matters, involvement with the police, injury or accident or changes in employment status, it is the foster carers’ responsibility to relay this information to the fostering team, via their supervising social worker. Some changes in circumstancesrequire some additional assessment to be presented within a foster care review.

**Channel: Protecting Children from Extremism**

Channel is a multi-agency approach to safeguarding, supporting and protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk of radicalisation, extremism or terrorist related activity.

Refer to: [Prevent / Channel Referral Process (teescpp.org.uk)](https://www.teescpp.org.uk/procedures-and-guidance-on-specific-issues-that-affect-children/prevent-channel-referral-process/)

**Children’s Guides to Fostering:**

The Fostering Service provides Children in Our Care with a Guide to Fostering when they move into a foster placement. The guide provides information regarding the Fostering Service as well as wider information that will help inform children about supports available to them by their carers and wider professionals while they are being cared for. The Guides are written in a child-centred way. Carers are encouraged to work through the book and ensure that children can understand the content.

**Child-Minding**

For foster carers who are also child-minders, please see the Child Minding policy.

Refer to: **Child Minding Policy.**

# Children’s Guardian or CAFCASS officer (formerly Guardian ad Litem)

A Children’s Guardian is an independent officer from the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS). He/she is usually an experienced children’s social worker who is appointed by the Court to represent the interests of a child/children in court proceedings.

He/she is independent of all other persons involved in the case and is appointed to ensure that the well-being and interests of the child are safeguarded and promoted. The Guardian may contact foster carers for information because foster carers have particular knowledge of the child’s day to day life. They will wish to arrange tospeak with children to ascertain their wishes and feelings.

Children’s Guardians are bound by confidentiality but may need to include information given by foster carers in court reports, which will then be available to others involved in the case.

## Children In Our Care

The term “Children in Our Care” refers to all children and young people who are placed in the care of the local authority, whether this is with in-house foster carers (including Family & Friends foster carers, independent agency foster carers, or residential children’s homes).

## Children In Our Care Review

Every child or young person who is accommodated by the Local Authority will have a Children In Our Care Review. Initially, when a child is placed in foster care, a review will be held within 20 working days. Thereafter a review will be held 3 months following the first review and then every 6 months. This is a minimum requirement and a review can be called whenever it is considered necessary, and Foster Carers can request a review, as can a child. The Children In Our Care Review will focus on all aspects of the child’s needs and development and ensure that the child’s care plan is appropriate and that the placement is meeting their assessed needs. Foster carers will be expected to attend Reviews and give information as to how things are progressing for the child.

Prior to the Child in Our Care review, children and young people will be asked to share their views and answer a series of questions (tailored by their age) about how things are progressing for them at the present time; such as what is going well and what they might be worried about via the Viewpoint App. Their feedback will be shared with their Independent Reviweing Officer.

Foster Carers may need to remind the child or young person in their care about completing their Viewpoint survery, or may need to assist them in doing so.

Additionally, if you have any queries or concerns about Viewpoint you can speak to your Supervising Social Worker or email viewpoint@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

## Children In Our Care Council

The Children In Our Care Council is a group of young people in the care of the Local Authority who meet to discuss issues that are important to them. The Children In Our Care Council aim to work with the Local Authority to improve services and support t Children In Our Care and Care Leavers. In Redcar and Cleveland the Children In Our Care Council is called ‘Have Your Say’ and is for children and young people aged 12 + years. If the young person in your care would like to attend, please contact his/her social worker.

## Children In Our Care Social Work Team

The Children In Our Care Team provides social work services to children in care once it has been agreed that the plan for the child or young person is to be in care on a long term basis. The team of social workers from the Children In Our Care work to provide services that ensure stability of placement, access to leisure, health and education services and planning which enables the child / young person to make a successful transition to adulthood. The team work closely with all other teams to ensure that the children’s plans and placements meet their needs and their transition to adulthood is well supported. Children should be aware of how to contact their social worker.

**Child Sexual Exploitation -** seeVEMT

**Clothing**

Foster carers need to ensure that children have appropriate clothing available and that it is of a good standard and appropriately fitting. At times parents may request that a younger child is brought to family time in specific clothing items they have purchased – and this is a good way of building a positive and professional relationship with birth parents.

If a child arrives in placement with very little clothing, carers will at times need to purchase items quickly to meet the child’s immediate needs. It is important to discuss with Supervising Social Worker/Child’s Social Worker if the birth parents have other clothing that can be passed on for the children so they have familiar clothing items. It is recommended that foster carers can demonstrate that they are regularly spending children’s Fostering Allowance to renew clothing items. It is also important that children are involved in an age-appropriate way in making choices about clothing purchases.

# Complaints Procedure

This procedure is underpinned by Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 where standard 22. 10 states that fostering services ‘*ensure that a clear distinction is made between investigation into allegations of harm and discussions over standards of care’*

This procedure relates to standards of care provided by a foster carer and their ability and willingness to undertake the fostering role. **If there are concerns about the safety and well-being of a child in the care of a foster carer or previously in the care of a foster carer, these matters will be dealt with through the allegations procedure.**

Should someone want to make a complaint or raise a concern about a foster carer and the process for this is outlined below:-

1. The matter is brought to the attention of the foster carer’s supervising social worker who will arrange to visit to discuss the nature of the complaint or concern.
2. The supervising social worker will then discuss with this with the fostering team manager and agree how this complaint or concern is going to be addressed.
3. Foster carers, as well as the complainant, will be kept up to date about the progress of the complaint or concern and any action that is required.
4. Our aim is to resolve matters informally to the satisfaction of everyone involved and we will work with those involved to bring matters to a swift and positive close.
5. If the complainant is not happy about the outcome of the complaint or concern, they have a right to make a formal complaint following the Redcar & Cleveland social care complaints procedure which can be viewed by clicking on the following hyperlinks:

Refer to: **Complaints Procedure**

* <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/resident/complaints-feedback/Pages/Childrens-Social-Care-Complaints-Procedure.aspx>
* <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/resident/complaints-feedback/Documents/Childrens%20Complaints%20Procedure.pdf>
* <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/resident/complaints-feedback/Documents/Corporate%20Complaints%20Procedure.pdf>

**Confidentiality and Data Protection (GDPR)**

Confidentiality can be described as information which someone does not wish other parties to have access to without their consent

Prior to accepting a placement, the placement officer or the child’s social worker should share with you sufficient information about the child’s background to enable you to care for the child. This information will include details of the child and his/her family, and the circumstances which led to becoming a Child in Our Care. This information will be personal, highly sensitive and is strictly confidential. This information should never be shared with any third party, including members of your own family or community.

Any paper documentation should be stored in a lockable cabinet/document case and only retained while a child is in placement. Once a child leaves the foster home, documentation should be returned to the Fostering Service so it can be securely shredded. Children’s documents should not be sent in the post, unless this is requested by Children’s Services, in which case a secure delivery option should be agreed.

When information regarding children is being shared electronically with social workers it is important that emails do not include identifying information and any documents attached should be password protected. It is crucial that foster carers always carefully check the address that emails are sent to to ensure accuracy.

If information about a child is mislaid or sent in error by email it is important that foster carers make their Supervising Social Worker aware of a potential data protection breach.

Children’s Services holds information in relation to children in our care and in relation to foster carers. The Fostering Service can, on request, provide information in relation to rights of access to information held and its wider data protection (GDPR) policies.

 Any breach of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may lead to the deregistration of foster carers.

**Disclosures**

Information should be shared when those involved feel a child or their family is suffering or is at risk of significant harm either from others, to themselves or to others. In this situation information may be shared even without consent of the particular individual(s). The foster carer should immediately notify the Child’s Social Worker or Team Manager as a matter of urgency. If it is out of hours, foster carers should contact E.D.T.

|  |
| --- |
|  Refer to: **G.D.P.R Statement**  |

## Corporate Parenting

Corporate parenting is the role the Local Authority, i.e. Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council as a whole, and not just Children’s Services, shares with the parents in relation to Children In Our Care. Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of all Departments, individuals and Elected Members who participate fully to achieve the best possible outcomes for all Children In Our Care and young people, as any good parent would.

The overall aim of looking after children away from home is to promote well-being and success, prevent harm and ensure that children and young people reach their full potential emotionally, physically, educationally and socially.

The Local Authority, as a Corporate Parent, will aim for standards equivalent to those of a well-informed parent and should ask the question "***Would this be good enough for my child?***"

Corporate Parenting Principles: The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out 7 Corporate Parenting Principles to achieve the best possible outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers:

1.To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.

2.To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.

3.To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people. 4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Local Authority and it’s relevant partners.

5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.

7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

|  |
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|  Refer to: **Corporate Parenting Policy**  |

## Court Appearance

Foster Carers may be asked for diary recordings for Court. Sometimes, on very rare occasions, foster carers may be asked to attend Court to discuss the content in more detail. Foster carers’ supervising social worker or another member of the fostering team will attend alongside the foster carer and help them prepare for this.

 **D**

## Data protection (GDPR) and Confidentiality

Confidentiality can be described as information which someone does not wish other parties to have access to without their consent.

Prior to placement, foster carers will be given information about the child's background/family to enable them to care for the child. This information may include details of the child and his/her family, and the circumstances which led to them becoming a Child In Our Care. This information will be personal and highly sensitive. It is shared with foster carers in confidence so that they can understand the circumstances and situation as to why the child requires a foster care placement, so that the foster carer(s) can meet the needs of the child. Any information about a Child in Our Care, or information about birth family must never be shared with any third party, this includes other approved foster carers.

When a disclosure is made to a foster carer from a Child in Our Care or from birth family, where there is a potential risk of serious harm to another person (whether that is the child placed or someone else) the information must be shared with the child’s/young person’s social worker or the team manager immediately. If out of hours, a foster carer should contact the Emergency Duty Team.

All electronic and written information given to the foster carers regarding the child should be securely stored and not accessible to anyone who has no right/reason to see it. We recommend a locked storage cabinet/filing cabinet/box or similar for storing confidential records. All electronic records should be password protected and not shared via e-mail unless all identifying features are removed.

Any breach of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary action and could lead to the deregistration of foster carers.

## Delegated Authority

Foster Minimum Standard 7.4 states that: *foster carers are supported to make reasonable and appropriate decisions within the authority delegated to them, without having to seek consent unnecessarily.* Foster carers do not hold Parental Responsibility but, under Delegated Authority guidance and good practice,foster carers should be able to make day to day decisions about the care of a child ‘as any good parent would’. Those decisions that are delegated to foster carers will be discussed in the Placement Planning Meeting and reviewed annually.

If there are any particular issues that arise, foster carers should seek advice from their supervising social worker or the child’s social worker to prevent delay for the child(ren).

There is a booklet for children and young people explaining the nature of delegated authority.[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/305147/Delegation\_of\_authority\_to\_carers\_YP\_version.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/305147/Delegation_of_authority_to_carers_YP_version.pdf)

**Further information is available on The Fostering Network website.**

[Day-to-day decision making (delegated authority) | The Fostering Network](https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/practice-information/day-day-decision-making-delegated-authority)

 Refer to: **Delegated Authority Policy**

**See also Care Planning Regulations Annex 5:** [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1000549/The_Children_Act_1989_guidance_and_regulations_Volume_2_care_planning__placement_and_case_review.pdf)

## De-registration

When approved as foster carers, by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council’s Agency Decision Maker (ADM), information relating to approval status is registered on the foster carers’ electronic file. Foster carers’ registration is subject to an annual review.

If foster carers decide they no longer wish to foster, they should tender their written resignation, giving 28 days’ notice for any placement to the fostering team manager. The Team Manager will reply and confirm that the notice has been received. It is not possible to retract a resignation that has been formally notified to the Fostering Service.

It may, in certain circumstances, be necessary for Children’s Services to initiate the process to De-register a foster carer if there are serious concerns about their conduct or standards of care given by a carer to the child/young person.

 In the following circumstances a Foster Carer Review would be held to consider whether a carer’s approval status would be considered and a recommendation made:

Where allegations that a foster carer has abused a child in their care, have been substantiated.

* Where a foster carer commits a serious criminal offence.
* Where there is evidence of non-compliance with the Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, or the Foster Carer Agreement. This may involve a single serious incident or a series of more minor incidents that have continued despite the issues being raised by the supervising social worker with the foster carer.

When the Foster carer is no longer capable of providing foster care for health or other reasons

If the Foster Carer Review recommends termination of approval, the review minutes will be presented to the Fostering Panel who will make a recommendation as to whether or not the foster carers are to be de-registered. The minutes and outcome of the Fostering Panel will then be referred to the ADM for his/her decision.

The Fostering Service registered manager will write to the foster carer informing him/her of the outcome of the Agency Decision Maker’s qualifying determination and give him/her 28 days in which to make representations either seeking a further fostering panel or to appeal the decision through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). 

Refer to: **Department for Edication Independent Review Mechanism:**

[Apply for a review panel: adopters and foster carers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-review-panel-adopters-and-foster-carers)

## Diary

**See recording**

## Digital Parenting (TV/DVD/ gaming consoles and internet, including social media)

The wide range of media available means children today could be exposed to violence, sexually explicit images and risk of involvement in Child Sexual Exploitation. It is the responsibility of foster carers to support children to use social media safely and offer appropriate supervision.

It is foster carers responsibility to ensure that children and young people are only exposed to sites, games and social media in line with the age restrictions.

Foster carers should also access training offered by the fostering team to ensure that they are keeping children safe online.

Where there are concerns in relation to a child or young person’s social media use there should be consideration by the Care Team around the child in relation to ways of keeping children safe. In some circumstances this may include temporary suspending access or increasing supervision around internet use.

Foster carers should also be mindful of their own ‘digital footprint’ and conduct themselves appropriately online. Further advice and guidance can be found on Redcar & Cleveland’s e-safety policy.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when one person or a group of people threaten, tease or embarrass someone else by using a mobile phone, the internet or other technologies.

Cyberbullying takes many forms. These include emails, direct/private messaging and chat groups, social networking sites, mobile phones, interactive gaming, sending viruses, including circulating inappropratie images of other people without their consent and abusing personal information.

If a Child In Our Care is experiencing mobile or on-line bullying, foster carers should contact the child’s school, social worker, and their own supervising social worker. Efforts will be made to have inappropriate posts removed from social media websites.

Refer to: **Digital Parenting Policy (e-safety)**

[Digital Passport supporting care experienced children | Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/ukcis-vulnerable-working-group/ukcis-digital-passport/)

[**https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/**](https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/)

[**https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/**](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/)

**Discipline – see Positive Behavior Strategies.**

**Disabilities** also see Respite/Support Care/Short Break Care.

Disability is defined as having conditions, including physical, sensory, learning and emotional, that have an impact on daily life and that are significant and long term.

Foster carers of a child with disabilities should familiarise themselves with organisations relating to the disability and gather and make use of information and resources available for the young person they are caring for. Foster carers should work closely with the social worker and any other professionals involved in ensuring the welfare of the child. Foster carers should be mindful of the respect and privacy required by the young person, whilst striving to ensure access to activities and other opportunities that would be given to children without disabilities.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is the main benefit for children with disabilities and it is to help meet all the extra costs of looking after a disabled child. PIP isn’t means tested and isn’t treated as income for other benefits. PIP can be claimed for a child by anyone who is looking after them as if they are their parent. ‘Parent’ includes foster carers but this money should only be used for the needs of the child and all expenditure from PIP payments should be recorded.

The Children With Disabilities Social Work Team can provide advice and support in relation to relevant services for children.

Refer to: [**Redcar & Cleveland People’s Information Network**](http://www.peoplesinfonet.org.uk/kb5/redcar/directory/localoffer.page) – information on local services and groups <http://www.peoplesinfonet.org.uk/kb5/redcar/directory/home.page>

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/claiming-benefits>

[Short Breaks For Carers of Disabled Children (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/resident/adult-children-health/children-services/more-information/Pages/Short-Breaks.aspx)

**Disruption of Placements**

Disruption is the word used to describe a placement which ends in an unplanned way. Redcar and Cleveland will always seek to support children and carers to try to prevent placements breaking down. A placement support plan will be put in place in circumstances where placements are under stress to try to maintain a placement. In some circumstances it may be agreed following discussion that a placement needs to end – however, wherever possible a placement ending should be done in a planned way, with discussion with the child’s IRO, social worker and fostering service being essential. Sadly, sometimes placements do still end in an unplanned way and it is important in these circumstances that there is learning about why this has happened. A Disruption Meeting may be arranged in relation to placements which were planned to be long term/permanent so that carers and professionals can consider the circumstances of a placement disrupting. The aim of a Disruption Meeting is to allow reflection on reasons for a placement ending, not to aportion blame.

Refer to : Disruption Policy

## Driving

It is a foster carer’s responsibility to ensure that the vehicle they use has Business Insurance and is road worthy and compliant with legislation. Should foster carers incur a charge for business insurance, it would be acceptable to use the transport proportion of the child’s allowance.

It is also the foster carers’ responsibility to ensure that all passengers are safe whilst travelling which includes using appropriate car seats and seat belts.

<https://www.capt.org.uk/news/out-and-about>

Supervising Social Workers will ask to see Car Insurance and MOT documents on an annual basis. Foster Carers must inform their Supervising Social Worker if they receive penalty points or are convicted of any other driving offences. Foster Carers must also let their Supervising Social Worker know if they have to cease driving due to a health condition.

Refer to: **Policy for Transporting Children and Young People**

**Drug and Alcohol Use by Foster Carers**

Foster carers have a responsibility to model responsible use of alcohol. Foster carers should also understand that the consumption of alcohol reduces concentration and impairs responses, and may lead to unprofessional behaviours. Foster carers should ensure that their consumption of alcohol does not impair or impede their ability to care for a child or young person.

Foster carers should also be aware that many Children In Our Care and young people have experienced trauma and abuse linked to alcohol. It is therefore vital that foster carers have an understanding of the foster child’s perceptions of adult drinking patterns and behaviour.

The illegal use of drugs and substances is strictly forbidden, and foster carers may face de-registration if found to be using or in possession of drugs or illegal substances.

Foster carers should also be mindful of the side effects of prescription drugs, and should

ensure that side effects do not impair their ability to care for a child or young person.

All alcohol and medication should be stored securely and should not be accessible to a child or younf person in the home.

Refer to: **Foster Carers Drugs and Alcohol Guidance 2020**

**Duty Supervising Social Worker & Placement Officer**

During office-hours, there is always a Supervising Social Worker on duty. If a foster carer requires support from the fostering service, foster carers should in the first instance contact their Supervising Social Worker. If the Supervising Social Worker is out of office, foster carers can contact the duty Supervising Social Worker (telephone number to be published).

Amanda Baxtrem is the Placement Officer for the fostering team. Foster carers should only contact Amanda Baxtrem if the query is regarding a placement or a request for respite care.

**E**

## Education

Continuity of education is extremely important for the children in our care. Maintaining friendships/relationships that have been made at school is also extremely important. Therefore, wherever possible, a child/young person will remain at the same school even after moving to a foster home. Foster carers need to be informed of transport arrangements and this is communicated at the Placement Planning Meeting, if not before. Where it is practically possible foster carers should provide the school transport as this supports a more ‘normal’ life for a child.

The Placement Planning Meeting will also agree foster carers’ roles in respect of school and agree who will attend consultation evenings, who will get progress reports etc. Foster carers, in partnership with parents and social workers are expected to be advocates for the child *as any good parent would.*

Foster carers should encourage children/young people in education, place emphasis on the importance of homework and attainment in school and demonstrate their support by attending open evenings and meetings with teachers*.*

Redcar & Cleveland Children’s Services are committed to achieving the best educational outcomes for Children In Our Care. If foster carers have any concerns regarding education for a child they care for they should contact the school, the child's social worker or their supervising social worker who can seek advice.

If a Children In Our Care or Care Leaver aged 16+ is engaged in further education, training and or employment they may receive a financial incentive from the Target Leaving Care Team which is payable for continued attendance.

### Virtual School

The Virtual School is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the education and attainment of Children In Our Care . The Virtual School is also responsible for ensuring that schools are trained in regard to supporting Children In Our Care and have a responsibility to report any concerns they may have regarding the child as well achieving better outcomes for Children In Our Care.

### Personal Education Plan (PEP) Meeting

This is a meeting which is normally held termly and which foster carers are expected to attend along with social workers. The PEP meeting looks at the child’s progress in education and identifies and agrees areas of support required for the child to make expected progress during the school year. Parents of children may attend PEP meetings where this is appropriate to support them in continued engagement with the child’s education.

### Pupil Premium

The Pupil Premium is Central Government funding that is given to schools to enhance the education of Children In Our Care and other groups who may experience educational disadvantages. The foster carers and parents have a right to request how the money is used but this will be discussed at a child’s PEP meeting.

|  |
| --- |
|  Refer to: **Supporting Children’s Education Policy****Department For Education**: [Promoting the education of](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Promoting_the_educational_achievement_of_looked_after_children_Final_23-....pdf)  Children In Our Care  |

### Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

More than 6 in 10 Children In Our Care have Special Educational Needs (SEND). A Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) outlines any special educational needs that a child has, and the provision a Local Authority must put in place to help them.

Not all children with SEND will qualify for an EHCP, however the school must provide support and provision to enable the child to make academic progress.

It is important for foster carers to take an active role in the education of Children In Our Care and work with social workers, parents, school staff, the SEND team, the Virtual School (VSH) and other professionals to ensure that needs for support are identified and addressed quickly so that the child can have the best possible experience and outcomes from their education.

 We encourage foster carers to speak out and advocate for the needs of any child they care for and ask them to discuss any concerns regarding SEND with their Supervising Social Worker.

Refer to: [Redcar and Cleveland SEND Local Offer](http://www.peoplesinfonet.org.uk/kb5/redcar/directory/localoffer.page)

**Email**

Being a foster carer is a professional role. Therefore, we require foster carers to have access to an email account that is soley used for fostering to enable them to communicate with the team and receive regular updates on training and support available.

We would recommend using Outlook and following the suggested format: firstnamesurname-fosteringredcar@outlook.com

If you require assistance setting up an email account, please speak to Hannah Wiley, the Training & Development Worker from the Fostering Team.

**Emergencies** see Accidents/Illness

## Emergency Duty Team

The Emergency Duty Team can be contacted in an emergency for advice and support and is available outside of normal office hours (5.00pm-8.30am and at weekends). When ringing the number for EDT, you will be asked for your telephone number and someone will then return your call as soon as possible.

EDT have access to the Local Authority database but it would be useful for foster carers to

have details available such as the name of the social worker, child's date of birth, family's

address, type of order etc.

### EDT Telephone 01642 524552

Refer to: **Role of EDT**

**End of placement/Moving on – see Planning for Positive Endings**

## Equality and Diversity

Foster carers, along with other professionals, are expected to be good role models for the children/young people in their care. The Fostering Service will not tolerate any form of discriminatory language, behaviour or actions from our foster carers, the wider fostering family or any other member of the Children’s Workforce.

We will not condone any insults, abuse, name-calling, humiliation, and threats. Should an allegation of discrimination be made against a foster carer, the Local Authority will take this very seriously and will investigate thoroughly. This may mean that the children in the care of the foster carer may be removed whilst investigations are on-going.

Foster carers can expect to be treated with respect and consideration. Staff from the Fostering Service and the wider workforce of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council will not behave in any way which discriminates against foster carers or their families on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Foster carers should speak to their supervising social worker if they have concerns or questions about equality and diversity matters.

Refer to: [**Equality, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Policy**](http://www.practicemanual.co.uk/Websites/practicemanual/images/Redcar_and_Cleveland/Fostering/RCBC_People_Services__Fostering-_Equality_Diversity_Anti_Discriminatory_Policy_v3_May_2015.doc)

## Equipment

Any equipment needed to care for a child such as prams, buggies, car seats, cots, beds, can be loaned to foster carers by the Fostering Service and can be obtained by contacting their supervising social worker. **Foster carers should not purchase equipment without prior agreement from the fostering team manager.**

Foster carers are asked to return all equipment in a clean, safe and working condition as they would expect it to be passed on to them. Foster carers should not pass equipment from carer to carer unless agreed by the supervising social worker.

**F**

 **Family Time**

Fostering Minimum Standard 9: foster carers have a duty to promote contact or, as it is known in Redcar and Cleveland, Family Time’.

Family Time has a significant value to a child even if there is no prospect of them returning home; it helps maintain a child's sense of who they are, their origins and roots, and serves to keep open options for family relations in later life.

Family Time usually takes placeat the Beach House in Redcar or out in the community and is usually supervised by a Family Time Worker. It is often the foster carers responsibility to transport the child to and from Family Time. Foster carers mileage will be paid in line with procedures.

Foster carers should record and discuss with their supervising social worker or the child’s social worker any concerns or positive feedback prior to and following contact.

In addition, some family time may take the form of telephone discussions or use of Skype/FaceTime/TEAMS/Zoom apps to facilitate contact between the child and their family. In these circumstances, foster carers will be expected to supervise this and advice/training will be offered on how to supervise. Where it forms part of a child’s care plan, foster carers can also promote in-direct Family Time by encouraging the child or young person in their care to send letters, cards and home made presents as these help to maintain the link between the child and their family.

Foster carers should not agree to changes ofFamily Time arrangements without consulting the child’s social worker and their Supervising Social Worker.

Sometimes we ask foster carers to facilitate sibling contact within the foster home and this will be written in the Placement Planning Meeting so all parties agree to the arrangements and are clear about conditions, including risk assessments.

**Finances**

# Child’s Allowances

The fostering service will pay a child’s allowance for each child placed with a foster carer. This allowance is to cover the costs of caring for a child or young person.

The amount is paid weekly into the carer’s bank/ building society and are in line with the recommendations the Department for Education on Minimum Fostering Allowances.

The allowance is intended to cover the costs associated with caring for a child (see below for a suggested breakdown of allowance).

An additional one week’s allowance will be paid to foster carers ahead of a Child In Our Care’s Birthday to cover the costs associated with celebrating a birthday.

An additional one week’s allowance will be paid to foster carers of school aged children at the start of the school summer holidays.

Foster carers will also be paid one week’s child allowance ahead for one main religious festival per year (Christmas / Eid). If a child celebrates dual religious festivals, this payment can be divided. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker if you have a child who celebrates dual religious fesitvals.

Foster carers are expected to use part of the food allowance to pay for school meals or provide a packed lunch as Childrenin In Our Care do not automatically get free school meals.

0 – 4 YEARS - **£145 per week**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FOOD | £40.00 |
| CLOTHING | £30.00 |
| POCKET MONEY & SAVINGS | £10 (£5 pocket money / £5 savings. If the child does not spend his / her pocket money, the remainder should be added to his / her savings).  |
| HOUSEHOLD  | £40.00 |
| TRANSPORT | £5 |
| SURPLUS  | £20 |

5 TO 10 YEARS - **£165 per week**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FOOD | £50.00 |
| CLOTHING | £30.00 |
| POCKET MONEY & SAVINGS | £12 (£6 pocket money / £6 savings. If the child does not spend his / her pocket money, the remainder should be added to his / her savings).  |
| HOUSEHOLD  | £45.00 |
| TRANSPORT | £8.00 |
| SURPLUS  | £20.00 |

11 TO 15 YEARS - **£205 per week**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FOOD | £65.00 |
| CLOTHING | £40.00 |
| POCKET MONEY & SAVINGS | £20 (£10 pocket money / £10 savings. If the child does not spend his / her pocket money, the remainder should be added to his / her savings).  |
| HOUSEHOLD (inc costs associated with child care) & SURPLUS  | £45.00 |
| TRANSPORT | £15.00 |
| SURPLUS | £20.00 |

16 TO 17 YEARS - **£250**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FOOD | £65.00 |
| CLOTHING | £50.00 |
| POCKET MONEY & SAVINGS | £45 (£20 pocket money / £25 savings. If the child does not spend his / her pocket money, the remainder should be added to his / her savings).  |
| HOUSEHOLD (inc costs associated with child care) & SURPLUS  | £45.00 |
| TRANSPORT | £20.00 |
| SURPLUS | £25.00 |

**Fostering Fee**

This is a payment made to Foster Carers to reflect their time and commitment to fostering and is paid per household, not per child.

**Additional Information.**

Foster Carers can claim working tax credits but cannot claim child benefit, income support or benefits for the child as their dependent, or free school meals for children they care for on behalf of the Local Authority.

**Respite Carer**

Some foster carers may be approved as respite carers, and offer care for a child or young person when their main carer is unavailable. Further information regarding the allowances and fees for respite carers can be obtained from the fostering service.

**Short Break Care**

Some foster carers may be approved as short break carers to care for children or young people with disabilities. Further information regarding the allowances and fees for respite carers can be obtained from the fostering service.

**Self Employment**

Once approved foster carers become **self employed** so if the couple become approved both are self-employed. Therefore, foster carers need to register as such and declare their income from fostering (both the fee/reward and allowance/maintenance- child’s payment) and file a tax return. The **HMRC have created a free e-learning module for foster carers** which provides detailed information about tax credits and benefits along with advice about registering as self-employed, qualifying for care relief, what records you need to keep for HMRC and how to foster in partnership.

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/tax-arrangements>

Income is declared for each tax year to 5th April. The **tax allowances** that apply to foster carers are as follows: £10,000 per annum which is spread pro rata across the tax year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifying-care-relief-foster-carers-adult-placement-carers-kinship-carers-and-staying-put-carers-hs236-self-assessment-helpsheet/hs236-qualifying-care-relief-foster-carers-adult-placement-carers-kinship-carers-and-staying-put-carers-2020>

**National Insurance:** You can also apply for national insurance credits which preserves your right to basic rate pension.

**Advice and Guidance: The fostering service strongly recommends that carers obtain independent financial advice / tax advice from a reputable source.**

Support with tax returns and finances can be obtained through the FosterTalk tax team who will provide members with their Foster Carer Finances booklet. They will also provide useful, up to date information on carer tax and accountancy matters within their quarterly FosterTalk magazine.  Please make use of your FosterTalk membership helplines on 0844 800 3880 for further advice and assistance.

## Overpayments/underpayments

The definition of an overpayment is where a carer is paid an amount in excess of their Service Agreement/contractual entitlement. All carers have a responsibility to immediately notify their supervising social worker if they receive an overpayment. Any overpayments must be repaid in full.

**Pocket money**: Having pocket money is good for the child/young person. It gives a sense of independence and a measure of choice in making decisions about how the money is spent. Receiving pocket money helps children understand the value of money and is the start of developing budgeting skills.

The amount to be paid must be clarified and addressed within the Placement Plan at the Placement Planning Meeting. The Fostering Service provides indicated amounts according to a childs age. Children should also be encouraged to have a bank account and to make regular savings.

|  |
| --- |
| Refer to: * <https://www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/claiming-benefits>
* [Benefits for Foster Carers](https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/claiming-benefits-while-fostering)
* [Fostering Network Advice](https://www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/foster-carers/finances/benefits#.VYgCFP7bLct)
* [TAX INFORMATION FOR ALL - FosterTalk](https://www.fostertalk.org/tax-information-for-all/)
 |

**Fire Arms**

 During the assessment process, if carers have a firearm on the premises a firearm certificate must be seen. Firearms and ammunition should be stored safely as required by the Police as a requirement of their licence. Careful consideration is given to the reasons for keeping such weapons, the way in which they are used, how they are cleaned, transported and the number/variety of weapons kept.

Refer to: **Firearms Policy**

## Foster Care Agreement

Approved foster carers with Redcar & Cleveland will be asked to sign an Agreement outlining the responsibilities, requirements and expectations of the partnership between foster carers and Children’s Services.

Should a foster carers’ approval need changing, foster carers are required to sign a new Foster Care Agreement.

Refer to: [**https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards)

## FosterTalk

FosterTalk delivers independent advice and support services focussed on foster carers. The company works throughout the UK to support foster carers. Redcar & Cleveland Foster carers become members of FosterTalk once approved. Carers can access the helpline and the Fostering Service can request independent support for carers if they are subject to allegations.

The FosterTalk website provides guidance and resources to support foster carers in their role.

Refer to: <https://www.fostertalk.org/>

**H**

**Haircuts and Hair Care**

Within Placement Planning Meetings it is important that it is clarified if foster carers have delegated authority to reach decisions about children’s haircuts. This is an area where parents may have views and consultation may be best where a significant change of style is contemplated. However the views of children also need to be considered when they are older and want to reach their own decisions.

Carers of black and minority ethnic children need to consider whether children may need any specific skin or hair care products, and explore the availability of hairdressers and barbers with expertise in relation to specific hair types/styles.

## Health

Fostering Minimum Standard 6 requires that children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs. Foster carers play a key role in ensuring good health outcomes for the children they care for. As any good parent would, foster carers should work with health professionals to identify and address any particular health needs including access to specialist provision.

Children In Our Care are no different to their peers when it comes to childhood illnesses, allergies and other common complaints. Every day childhood ailments can usually be managed by general services including G.Ps, pharmacies, and walk in centres.

Children In Our Care are, however, more likely to experience more serious conditions than their peers as a result of the neglect and abuse that they may have experienced. For this reason, the health of Children In Our Care is very carefully monitored and a health review is completed every six months for children aged 0-5 and annually for older children. The first health review after coming into care is usually completed by a paediatrician. After the first review, children may be seen by their G.P or school nurse and foster carers should support the child to express a preference as to how this happens. Pre-existing health needs and how to manage these will be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting. There is a legal requirement for Local Authorities to have a Health Care Plan for every child/young person it looks after; this is discussed as part of every Children In Our Care review.

The Fostering Service expects that foster carers will support and facilitate attendance at all health appointments.

Children’s health forms part of their Children In Our Care Review and foster carers will be expected to contribute to the discussion around the child’s health at this meeting.

Foster carers must ensure that they have the Delegated Authority to give medication to a child prior to them administering it. Foster carers will also be required to complete Administration of Medication (Foundation) Training via The Foster Carer Training Hub within the first 12 months of approval and Administration of Medication (Advanced) Training every year thereafter.

For routine medication this may have been agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting but there may be situations that require prescribed medications where consent from parents needs to be sought. Foster carers should discuss this with their supervising social worker or child’s social worker who can inform parents and gain consent.

Where children have complex health needs and may require invasive procedures foster carers must first have completed relevant training on procedures and have consent to perform these.

In emergency situations, hospitals are aware of the procedures to follow and would not withhold vital treatment over an issue of consent.

Young people aged 16 and over can make their own decisions about treatment and sharing of their health information providing they fully understand the consequences of their decision. In some circumstances younger children have the same rights. This is sometimes referred to as Gillick competency/ Fraser Guidelines

Useful websites with general advice and information regarding some common childhood health matters

* [**NHS Child Health**](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Childhealth6-15/Pages/Childhealth615home.aspx)

* [**Allergy UK – Child Allergy**](http://www.allergyuk.org/child-allergy-menu/child-allergy) (Useful factsheets downloadable from this site)

* [**NHS - Food allergies in children**](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/food-allergies-in-children.aspx?tabname=Labour%20and%20birth)

* [**NHS interactive tools**](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Toolslibrary.aspx?Tag=Child+health&Page=1) (videos, slideshows, quizzes)

* [**NHS Healthy Eating**](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx)

**First Aid**

All First Aid/medication given must be recorded and, in the case of prescribed or pharmacy only medication, must be notified on an accident / incident report form and sent into the Fostering Service within 24 hours.

Foster carers must undertake paediatric first aid training and update training as required.

### GP

Once a child is placed with foster carers, the Placement Planning Meeting will discuss the feasibility of them maintaining registration with their own GP, taking into consideration the expected length of the placement. It may be decided that it is in the child’s best interests to be registered with the foster carers’ G.P.

### Opticians

If the child wears glasses the foster carer should take the child to their usual opticians if possible. It is the responsibility of the foster carers to get a child’s eyes tested, in line with optician’s advice.

**Dental Treatment**

Foster carers will ensure that children are taken for regular dental check ups and any other dental treatment that is required. Where possible the child’s normal dentist will continue to be used. Foster carers will support children in maintaining good dental hygiene.

## Health and Safety in the Home/Outdoors

Supervising social workers complete a Health and Safety Questionnaire with their foster carers prior to being approved and thereafter on an annual basis. Foster carers have a duty to ensure that avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a family home and risks are minimised. Foster carers should seek support of the fostering service if they are unsure with regards to any Health & Safety issues. The Health and Safety Form should be signed and dated by foster carers and their Supervising Social Worker.

Refer to: **Health & Safety Policy**

 **I**

## Identity

It is important that children are supported to understand their identity and life history**.**

Identity is formed through the child or young person’s lived experience. Children may identify as a member of one or several families, as a person from a geographic region or country; as a person with cared-for experience; as a pupil at a school; as a member of a team; and or as a member of other groups to whom they feel associated and connected.

It is important that foster carers assist young people to understand and explore important aspects of their identity, and this can assist them indeveloping resilience and a sense of belonging.

Foster carers should advocate for children and young people to be provided with support in understanding their life history through Life Story Work. Foster Carers will ensure that children are able to collect important memorabilia from their time in placement and have access to a memory box/life story book.

Foster carers are normally not encouraged to allow children to refer to them as Mum and Dad, however, with longer term placements children at times may start referring to foster carers in this way. This needs sensitive handling and it is important to help children to understand their connection to birth family as well as their foster care family. It is often best to encourage children to call their foster carers by their first names.

Refer to:

[Identity | The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/young-people/well-being/resources/identity)

### Religion

It is important for a child's identity that any religious preferences that they may have are acknowledged and supported whilst they are in foster care. Foster carers cannot impose their own religious beliefs, or attempt to change the child's beliefs. Religious preferences will be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting.

BBC guide to world religions

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>

FosterLine Fact Sheets

[Factsheets Archives | Page 2 of 2 | Fosterline](https://www.fosterline.info/resource-category/factsheets/page/2/)

### Sexual orientation and gender identity

Children and Young People need to feel accepted, understood, valued and supported in all areas of their development including their sexual orientation and gender identity. If a young person is struggling with their sexual identity, then they may want to talk to their foster carer about this, who should be prepared to offer support and information ‘as any good parent would’. If a young person’s behavior is placing them at risk of harm then foster carers should follow safeguarding procedures and speak to their supervising social worker and the young person’s social worker.

Further information and guidance can be found at:

Childline – Sexual Identity

<https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/sexual-identity/Pages/Sexual-Identity.aspx>

Hart Gables – a Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Gay and Transgender (LGBT) Support Service working across Teesside

<http://www.hartgables.org.uk/>

### Culture

Culture is an important part of a young person's identity and heritage founded on many different factors, memories, background, racial identity, religion, class, experience, family attitudes, values and beliefs. All foster carers should value, respect and promote a child's cultural heritage. Information about the child/young person’s culture should be obtained at the Placement Planning Meeting.

Further Resources:

[Caring for Black and Mixed Heritage Children | Fosterline](https://www.fosterline.info/resource/caring-for-black-and-mixed-heritage-children/)

### Changing a Child's Name

Foster carers are not allowed to change the name, surname or forename of a child placed with them. Where a child is old enough to make this decision themselves and expresses a wish to change their name, foster carers should seek advice from the social worker and supervising social worker regarding the legal routes by which this can be explored.

## Insurance

Fostering allowances contain an element to cover general wear and tear to furniture and property, but it is every carer's responsibility to have adequate insurance for buildings and contents. It is important that foster carers inform their insurance company that they are foster carers and will care for children up to age 18 years, other than their own. This information should be put in writing to the insurance company with a request for written confirmation that, for the purpose of the policy, Children In Our Care are regarded as members of the family.Therefore, any damage caused by Children In Our Care is regarded in exactly the same way as damage by foster carers’ own children. If buildings and contents are insured separately remember both companies should be notified.

**L**

## Leaving Care Service - TARGET

### Preparing for adulthood

TARGET Leaving Care Team provides a service for Children In Our Care and Care Leavers aged 16 -21 (up to 25 if in training or education). This support includes preparing young people gradually to be ready to leave foster care, paying attention to practical self-care needs such as health, budgeting, domestic skills and personal and relationship dimensions. The team works to maximise the education, training and employment outcomes for young people leaving care and ensures young people leaving care have access to a range of accommodation and the support and skills to maintain themselves in their accommodation.

The Target Resource Centre offers a planned and a 'drop-in' service for young people for advice and guidance; to visit their personal adviser; to participate in group work and project work; to use the facilities such as computers, washing machine, and telephone; or to just relax and have refreshments.

TARGET Leaving Care Team can be contacted directly at:-

TARGET

16 Milbank Terrace

Redcar

Telephone: 01642 488433

[Care Leaver Local Offer](https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/children-and-families-services/care-leaver-local-offer)

## Leisure

# Clubs/Hobbies

The role of the foster carer is to encourage children and young people to develop interests and skills beyond those they participate in at school (Fostering Minimum Standard 7- Leisure Activities). Children within the fostering placement are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities. Children have permission to take part in age-appropriate peer activities as would normally be granted by a reasonable parent to their children, within the framework of the placement plan. Decision-making and any assessment of risk to the child should be undertaken on the same basis as a reasonable parent would do. Where higher risk/hazardous activities are being considered it would be appropriate for foster carers to seek the advice of their Supervsing Social Worker/Child’s social worker so that there can be a wider assessment/consideration of risks.

 It is expected that the fostering allowance covers for any expenses incurred by the child attending out of school activities.

**Fostering Caravan**

The fostering team has a caravan which is situated in Crimdon Dene. The caravan is available for Foster Carers to use at a cost of £50 per booking. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker for further details.

## Life Story Work

Children in foster care, who are separated from their families, may struggle to have a good understanding of their family background and past experiences. A child who doesn’t have this understanding might find it difficult to advance in some areas of their development.

Life Story Work makes sense of a child’s past; it gives them a history and carers play a vital part in this. Every foster carer should keep a record of the child’s time with them for the child to keep.

In addition to a life story book foster carers should encourage the young person to keep a memory box, where they can keep items that are special to them, e.g. photos, cinema tickets, cards, invitations to parties.

There is training and literature available on Life Story Work. Please ask your supervising social worker or Hannah Wiley the Training & Development Worker for more information.

Refer to: **Life Story Policy**

**M**

## Missing from Care

### If you have reason to believe that a child/young person has gone missing (including failing to return to placement):

* Firstly take action to look for the child – if the child has a phone try to make contact.
* Consider the child’s age and vulnerability and risk assessment
* Inform the child’s social worker/or out of hours EDT on 01642 524552  (if you can’t reach the child’s social worker please inform your supervising social worker, a duty worker or a Team Manager).
* Contact the police and inform them of a missing episode. The police will require child’s name/DOB/ where, when and who if any one they went missing with, what child was last wearing, description of young person, recent photo, medical history, time and location last seen, circumstances of going missing/details of friends and associates. If there are existing concerns that the young person is Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing or Trafficked (see VEMT), this must be shared with the police call handler
* The social worker will contact the parents.
* It is important to keep in touch with the department and Police while the child/young person is missing.
* Once the child / young person has been located, the foster carer must inform everyone who has been involved that they have been found.
* The social worker will undertake a visit within 72 hours to complete a Return to Placement Interview by the Children’s Social Worker.

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|  Refer to: **Missing From Placement Policy** [**Department for Education** – Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home and care 2014](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care__3_.pdf) **Government Strategy:** [Missing Children and Adults Strategy 2011](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117793/missing-persons-strategy.pdf)  |

 **O**

## Ofsted

The Fostering Service is subject to an inspection by Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education. This inspection is part of an overall inspection of local authority services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers.

Inspections look at the experiences and progress of:

•children who need help and protection, including early help

•children looked after, including: adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, children who return home, and achieving permanent homes and families for children and young people

•young people leaving care or preparing to leave care

The inspection can take place at any time, and the local authority will get one day’s notice of the inspection.

As foster carers, you may be asked to play an active part in this. This could be part of a group of foster carers who would meet with an inspector for a discussion, or you may be one of a small number of fostering families, who will be visited at home. The home visits give the foster carers and children the opportunity to look at and discuss all aspects of fostering from their individual perspective.

There may also be some occasions when the young people you care for will be asked to take part in a children’s group with the inspectors, and we ask that foster carers be proactive in encouraging them to participate and promote it positively.

Ofsted publish information on their website regarding inspections and frameworks.

[Inspecting local authority children’s services - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services)

**Overnight Stays/Sleepovers (see also Delegated Authority)**

As part of placement planning meetings there should always be discussion regarding delegated authority and whether foster carers are able to agree to children staying over at a friends home. In may situations this will be delegated to foster carers, however, there may be situations where a child or young person’s care plan is complex and where agreement of the child’s social worker would be required.

In making decisions about whether or not to permit a looked after child to stay overnight with a friend or to have a holiday with their friends or with relatives of their foster carers, or to go on a school trip, foster carers and responsible authorities should consider the following factors:

• Whether there are any relevant restrictions contained for exceptional reasons in the child’s care plan, including the placement plan;

• Whether there are any court orders which restrict the child from making a particular overnight stay, visit or holiday;

• Whether there are any factors in the child’s past experiences or behaviour which would preclude the overnight stay, visit or holiday;

• Whether there are any grounds for concern that the child may be at significant risk in the household concerned or from the activities proposed;

• The age and level of understanding of the child concerned;

• What is known about the reasons for the overnight stay, visit or holiday;

• The length of the stay.

If not already known, it is important that foster carers seek to acquaint themselves with the parents of the child’s friends when a sleepover/overnight stay is being explored, so that there can be appropriate discussions (within the limits of confidentiality); consideration of any risk factors (eg. activities planned) and exchange of contact details and addresses, with a contingency plan if the child wishes to return to their foster carer earlier than envisaged.

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## Parents of Children In Our Care

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Many parents of children who are being cared for by foster carers will naturally have worries and concerns about the welfare of their children. It can sometimes seem that parents are asking for things which foster carers are not able to provide or facilitate, such as visits on certain days or telephone calls at unreasonable hours. The Placement Planning Meeting will cover all of these possibilities and ensure that the parents understand what is and isn’t acceptable. It is generally in the best interests of the child that foster carers and parents develop a good professional relationship and that foster carers demonstrate respect towards parents. If the situation becomes difficult, you can speak with the child’s social worker and your supervising social worker. The issue may need to be discussed at the child’s Children In Our Care Review.

It is rare that a parent would unexpectedly visit the foster carers’ home and demand to take their child back but if this does occur you would need, in the first instance, to contact the police and also inform the child’s social worker or, if out of office hours, the EDT.

## Parental Responsibility

Defined as all the rights, powers, responsibilities, duties and authority which, by law, a parent has in relation to their child and his/her property. Parental responsibility is automatically held by birth mothers, and also by married fathers. An unmarried father may acquire parental responsibility by means of a formal agreement with the mother, or as a result of court proceedings. There *are* some circumstances where other people may acquire parental responsibility, or share parental responsibility with the parent, as in the case of a Care Order or Special Guardianship Order. Foster carers never acquire parental responsibility for the children cared for, but someone with parental responsibility, such as a parent or Children’s Services, can delegate authority to foster carers to take responsibility for the day to day care of Looked After Children.

See also Delegated Authority

## Passports

If you require a passport for the child, please contact their social worker or your supervising social worker as soon as possible and they will complete the necessary documentation. Consent for passports can only be given by a person with parental responsibility.

Young people can apply for an adult passport at age 16. Applications for passports for younger children can only be signed by a holder of parental responsibility – the parent or, if a care order is in place, an officer of the local authority. This does not prevent foster carers being authorised to undertake some of the preparation of the application form or, if necessary, collecting passports (with a letter of consent from the signatory) from regional passport offices. Passports are frequently a problem when carers want to take children on holiday at short notice, or early on in a placement. It is, therefore, essential that the placement planning meeting or first review considers arrangements for a passport application so this process is started as early as possible. For more information and guidance on this topic visit Passport Office Guidance Notes:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916017/looked_after_children__govuk.pdf>

## Planning for Positive Endings

When a child/young person moves on from a foster carers home, whether it is back to their parents’ home, to another carer, or to independent living, it will be an emotive time for the child, the foster carers and their family.

When a placement ends, whether it is planned or not, it is vitally important that the child/young person leaves taking with them the positives they have gained in the placement. It is important also that they have photos and other memorabilia available when they move placement which new carers can keep safe for them.

A planned move will give foster carers the time to give positive messages to the child, introductions to the future carer and the foster carers 'permission' to move on to the next placement. Children and carers need to 'tie up the ends' of one placement in order to move on physically and emotionally to the next one. It is important that a child takes their possessions when they leave; all they have come to the placement with, been bought or given belongs to them and must go with them.

For some children it may be very positive that some contact is retained with the previous foster carers when a placement ends, and this should be discussed as part of planning for a new placement.

If a foster carer wishes to initiate the end of a child or young person’s placement they are required to give Redcar & Cleveland Fostering Service a minimum of 28 days’ notice. This would need to be managed sensitively and with the full knowledge of the supervising social worker and the child’s social worker. An unplanned move, though not as easy, can still be positive; saying goodbye is important even if there have been problems. The foster carer will need to be positive and focus on the good things and attach no blame for placement breakdown to the child/young person.

The fostering service expects all children and young people who are leaving a fostering placement to have appropriate luggage (suitcase, back-pack etc), irrespective of where they are moving on to. The use of ‘black bags’ or carrier bags is not acceptable and should not be used under any circumstances.

## Pets

Pets in the home can help a child feel secure and can also be a good source of comfort to the child. However foster carers should be aware that not all children understand how to care for animals properly and may need guidance and supervision to ensure that they, and the pet, are not harmed. If the child is a known risk to animals we would not approach a foster carer who has pets.

A pet questionnaire is regularly updated but if there are any changes to pets in the home, please notify your supervising social worker.

The Dogs Trust periodically deliver events for children exploring pet care and safety around dogs.

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| Refer to: **Pet Policy** [Keeping children safe and dogs happy | RSPCA](https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/company/children/safe)[Learn with Dogs Trust, free educational workshops for children](https://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/) |

**Photos** see also Life Story Work

Photos and videos are a way to keep memories and provide a record of a child’s stay with you and the Fostering Service actively encourage foster carers to do this as part of normal family life. It is vital to respect a child’s right to confidentiality and privacy and ensure that no photo or video of a Child in Our Care is shared by foster carers or any members of their family or friends, with people who have no right to see it, including on social media and other websites and printed publications. Foster carers should ensure that children and young people are supported to keep their personal information, including photos, safe and that they are aware of the risks involved in sharing personal photos using apps and social media such as Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Foster carers should seek the advice of the child’s social worker with regard to photographs being taken at school, activity clubs etc and where photos might appear in the press.

See ThinkUKnow for advice on sharing personal photos

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14_plus/need-advice/selfies-and-sexting/>

## Placement Planning Meeting

A placement planning meeting should be held before the placement starts however in any event it should take place within 5 working days of a child being placed with a foster carer. The meeting discusses a child’s routine, health, education and other aspects of his / her life. It will also cover delegated authority in respect of the day to day activities and care of the child that foster carers are responsible for. It is often a good opportunity for foster carers to meet with a child’s parents and communicate about how the foster carers will look after their child. A child is more likely to settle in a placement knowing that their parents and foster carers are working together.

## Placement stability/support

Many Children In Our Care will have had little stability in their lives in terms of placement moves and in terms of who is caring for them; coping with multiple changes is very stressful. Children thrive on stability and routine and for children who have moved placements this can affect their ability to manage things like school work and personal relationships. As far as possible children need to know what to expect of carers and what is expected of them. Maintaining a child at their existing school can also be an important element of providing stability.

The role of a foster carer is key to providing children with stability and routine and in helping them to understand and prepare for any future changes.

If a foster carer feels that they need support as a placement is at risk of breaking down, it is important that they seek support from their supervising social worker at the earliest opportunity. It is vital that foster carers are open and honest with their Supervising Social Worker so as to minimise the chance of a placement breakdown.

In the event of foster carers wishing to end a placement, foster carers must notify the fostering service. There is a minimum notice period of 28 days to enable the foster service to identify a new placement for the child / young person. However, if no suitable alternttive placement cannot be identified within the 28 days, foster carers are expected to maintain the placement for however long they are required to, without compromising the standard of care offered to the child / young person.

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|  Refer to: **Placement Stability Policy**  |

## Professional Standards

Foster carers are representatives of the Fostering Service and the Local Authority and are therefore expected to conduct themselves in a way which represents the Local Authority as a positive and professional organisation. Foster carers will deal with a wide range of people, including other foster carers, professionals and birth families. The welfare of the Children In Our Care is of paramount importance and it is vital that all adults involved model polite and courteous behaviour towards each other and conduct themselves in a professional way at all times; working together for the benefit of Children In Our Care is a key competency for foster carers.

Foster carers should also conduct themselves in a professional manner in all meetings associated with the role of fostering.

Foster carers should also conduct themselves in a professional manner when attending support groups or training sessions and should.

Foster carers should adere to the Redcar & Cleveland Foster Carers Code of Conduct when attending any meetings or representing the fostering service in any capacity.

Foster carers should also maintain a professional online presence, including social media: foster carers should not post any information or photographs in relation to Children in Our Care; this includes comment threads on social media pages.

The fostering service encourages foster carers to raise any concerns around the behaviour or conduct of other foster carers or professionals with their Supervising Social Worker; this can be done in a confidential manner.

**Pocket Money (see Finances)**

## Positive Behavioural Strategies

Any behaviour, whether positive or negative, is a form of communication and may be the only tool that a child has to let people know how they are feeling. Whilst we support foster carers in maintaining good discipline and boundaries in their home, physical punishment is prohibited as stated the Children Act 1989.

 If the foster carer is struggling with discipline or boundary setting they should speak with their supervising social worker who will be able to offer support and signpost them towards further advice and support.

As part of foster carers ongoing training and support, there will be opportunities with regards the therapeutic parenting model of care referred to as ‘P.A.C.E’ (playfulness; acceptance; curiosity and empathy).

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|  Refer to: **Positive Behaviour Policy**  |

 **Preparation for Independence**

It is important that young people are supported by their foster carers to develop independent living skills, including cooking, laundry, independent travel and budgeting skills. It is important that support is available for children in our care to make a successful transition to independence at the time that is right for them. It is important that there is early exploration of Staying Put as an option when a young person reaches 18 years of age.

 **R**

**Records - Foster Carer's / Child's Files**

Children’s Services keep records on every Children in Our Care and their family. The database used is referred to as Protocol (or Liquid Logic). The Fostering Service keeps records, including a copy of foster carers assessment and approval documents, all relevant checks, references and foster carer's reviews as well as every day casenotes and training and support records. Redcar and Cleveland retain records in accordance with GDPR principles. It is important that children and young people are supported to understand what records social workers and foster carers make in relation to their care and wellbeing and explore ways of ensuring that the childs wishes and feelings are considered and recorded.

## Recording

Foster carers are normally expected to complete daily recordings, unless recording at a different frequency has been agreed. Good recording minimises the risks to both child and foster carer of allegations and complaints being made. In addition, good record keeping also helps identify patterns of behaviour that need support as well as providing a record of their time with the foster carer. Recording standards for Children’s Services require information about each child to be factual, non-stigmatising, accurate and up to date and each child should have a separate record. For this reason, we suggest foster carers keep separate recording for each child that is regularly shared and discussed with their supervising social worker and the child’s social worker.

It is important to keep a record of significant events and behaviours for a number of reasons:

* Recording the behaviour of a child along with dates and what lead up to the behavior could help identify a pattern for you to support the child.

* It can help to identify that the placement is fragile and therefore extra support is needed.

* Events and incidents documented can be recalled at a later date if there was a dispute about an injury/ accident, medication given etc.

* Written accounts can be useful at planning meetings, case conferences, reviews or court proceedings.

* Recording can reflect a child's progress in placement.

* A clear, precise, diary can reduce the risk to foster carers and their family if a complaint or allegation is made against them, especially if the complaint is made a long time after the event, when there may be problems recalling details

In whatever medium the recording is kept, information must be stored in a confidential and secure manner. Supervising social workers will ask to see recording during supervisions.

Refer to: **Recording Policy**

## Recruitment of Foster Carers for RCBC

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council is committed to the continued recruitment of foster carers and current foster carers have a role to play in this. It is a recognised fact that the best people to generate interest in fostering are the ones already involved in the task and to acknowledge the value of this Redcar & Cleveland have a reward scheme in operation that gives £250 worth of vouchers to the recommending carer when the prospective carer has been approved. Foster carer should speak to their supervising social worker if they know someone who may be interested in becoming a carer so that the Fostering Service can get in touch with them.

As foster carers, you may be asked to get involved with recruitment campaigns in the local area and / or speak to prospective foster carers in the Skills To Foster training.

## Reviews (foster carers)

Foster carers’ approval is reviewed annually by an Independent Reviewing Officer and reviews are presented at Fostering Panel prior to fostering for a year (first annual review) or if there are major changes in circumstances. In preparation for foster carers’ review the social workers of all children currently placed in the foster home, and of children who have lived in the home since the last review, will be contacted for comments on suitability of placement, experiences, difficulties and outcomes for each child.

The views of all children in placement will be sought and as well as the views of the foster carers own children. This gives everyone in the fostering household the opportunity to express what it is like for them to be living in this family that fosters.

The review takes into account the views of foster carers, submitted-both written and orally, regarding the suitability and effectiveness of all placements over the last year and any difficulties or issues that need addressing.

Any change of approval status or training needs/ achievements will be discussed. The carer, or the fostering service, can make a request for an earlier review if necessary.

## Safer Care

Foster Carers need to be mindful of safety and wellbeing when providing foster care. Each fostering household should have an up to date Safer care Plan. Safer care Plans need to explore:

* Keeping a child who is fostered safe from abuse or the memory of their experiences of abuse by preventing similar situations in the foster placement.

* Keeping children in the foster home safe from abuse by other children in the household.

* Keeping members of the foster family, and others, safe from false allegations of abuse.

The foster carer, along with support from their supervising social worker should devise a specific age-appropriate safer caring policy for each child. The foster carer can involve the child in helping to agree the policy and the safer caring rules.

Foster carers should undertake training in Safeguarding/safer care

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| Refer to: **Safer Caring Policy**  |

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

Safeguarding means:

* protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
* preventing harm to children’s health or development
* ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
* taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Foster carers are an integral part of the safeguarding process as they are caring for a child / children who has, or is likely to suffer significant harm. Foster carers should know the procedure if they have a safeguarding concern, and should be confident in following it. It is always best to err on the side of caution and raise a concern, rather than minimise it.

Refer to: **Safeguarding Policy and Procedure**

## Smoking/Vaping

As role models to the children they care for, foster carers play a vital role in modelling positive choices including non-smoking. For this reason Redcar & Cleveland Fostering Service require all foster carers to maintain a smoke free home and environment and should not smoke in the presence of Children in our Care. This includes the use of e-cigarettes and vapes. Additionally, because of the increased risks to younger children from passive smoking, foster carers for the under 5s should have stopped smoking for at least 1 year prior to a child under 5 being placed with them, which can be evidenced via a foster carer’s medical or G.P.

Family and Friends Foster Carers (Regulation 38): There can be additional complex issues involved where children are living with relatives who are approved as foster carers. When assessing relatives as foster carers for a specific child, there are particular issues to consider if the applicants are smokers. As with any potential foster carers who smoke, every effort should be made to encourage them to give up or to create a smoke-free home for the fostered child. However, any risk to the health of a child resulting from such a placement will need to be weighed against the potential benefits to a child of being placed with people who are part of their family (or friends) and with whom they are likely to have a preexisting bond. Children generally have better outcomes in such placements and an assessment will need to be made in each case as to whether the best interests of an individual child would be served by living with family and friends carers, even where there may be some doubt as to their ability to provide a smoke-free home for that child. Ongoing work would be needed to ensure that smoking was restricted as far as possible from the areas of the house that, particularly, a child under the age of five was accessing.

Further Information on smoking cessation:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/10-self-help-tips-to-stop-smoking/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/how-to-quit-smoking.htm>

<https://www.stopsmokingsouthtees.co.uk/>

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| Refer to: **Smoking Policy**  |

## Social Worker Visits

Social Workers have a statutory duty to visit children in care regularly and this is usually at least every four weeks (however for long term matches, these visits may be less frequent). However the child or carer should feel able to request a visit from the social worker whenever they feel it is needed. Please contact the social worker to arrange a mutually convenient visit.

The social worker visit is an opportunity to discuss any information about the child. The social worker should keep you informed of any developments/ changes in the child's family or legal proceedings and the foster carer should keep the social worker up to date about the child's day-to-day progress. This is where the foster carers recording is useful—written accounts of the child's reaction to contact, progress or problems at school and relationships with other children and yourselves. The child’s social worker should be able to speak to the child alone and, from time to time, should see the child’s bedroom. If the child is of sufficient age and has capacity to make an informed choice they may refuse to see their social worker and withhold consent for their bedroom to be seen.

## Standards of care

There may be times when professionals raise concerns about the standard of care offered by foster carers and may make a complaint about this. This is different from an allegation which involves a concern that there may been/there is a risk of serious harm to a child. A standard of care complaint will be investigated by the Fostering Team Manager and foster carers will be informed that a complaint has been made against them. Foster carers will be supported by the Fostering Service but also have a right to seek independent advice and support on this matter from Foster Talk. Once any investigation is complete, the foster carers will be advised in writing of the outcome and any recommendations: there may be no further action or there may be an action plan put in place to address the concerns. In circumstances where there have been serious or ongoing breaches of standards, there may be an early foster carer review which may lead to a recommendation of de-registration.

**Staying Put**

Since May 2014, fostered young people in England have the right to stay with their foster families when they reach 18 under a “Staying PutArrangement” if both parties agree.

A staying put arrangement is not the same as a foster placement. The young person staying put is no longer a Child In Our Care. They are a young adult and a care leaver. They are entitled to support as a care leaver and will be allocated a personal advisor from the Care Leavers / Target team. As a result, the foster carer is no longer acting in the capacity of foster carer for that young adult; they are their ‘former foster carer’. The foster placement becomes a ‘staying put arrangement’ and is not governed by fostering services regulations.

The ‘former foster carer’ offering a staying put arrangement may at the same time be offering foster placements to children who are looked after if they have sufficient space. Such placements will continue to be subject to provisions of the fostering services regulations. In these circumstances, the former cared for child will require a DBS check as they become a member of the fostering household.

Further Information:

**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/397649/CA1989\_Transitions\_guidance.pdf**

**Statement of Purpose**

Fostering National Minimum Standards require all fostering services to publish a Statement of Purpose providing key information about the Fostering Service and how it operates. This document is required to be regularly updated and copies made available to foster carers and a copy provided to OFSTED. A copy of the Statement of Purpose can be requested by foster carers via Supervising Social Worker of Fostering Service Admin. A Children’s Guide will be provided to the child in the Introduction to Foster Care pack.

## Support

Fostering can be a stressful role for everyone in a fostering family and seeking support should not be thought of as an inability to cope, or an indicator of failure or a weakness. Fostering families will have your own network of support such as extended family and friends, but other support is available from Supervising social workers, other foster carers, Foster Talk and foster carer support groups.

The support groups give an opportunity to get together informally and share the strains and joys of fostering in a safe and confidential setting, where other foster carers will be able to offer strategies and solutions because they have experienced similar issues. Details of support groups are emailed out regularly and foster carers can discuss support groups with their supervising social worker.

##  Support Care Policy / Babysitting Policy

Any individual who is going to babysit for children in foster care should normally have been subject to DBS checks. Foster Carers (as part of their initial assessment and approval process)  should have identified family members or friends who can provide regular “support care/babysitting” for them. Generally this pool of carers should be used wherever possible. Where foster carers do not have anyone identified as a potential support – there should be discussion with their Supervising Social Worker and child’s social worker so that consideration can be give to identifying someone and undertaking appropriate checks. It is important that identified sitters are well known to foster carers and ideally already known to the child.

Babysitters/Support Carers should always have carers contact details so that they can be contacted if need be and could return if necessary.

## Supervision

All foster carers receive supervision sessions from their supervising social worker on a regular basis (at a minimum every 3 months in addition to wider supervising social work visits and calls). This is an opportunity to discuss each placement and progress, to look at any issues the foster carer may have about fostering, to discuss training completed since last supervision and agree any future actions. Supervision will give the foster carer the opportunity of sharing their recording and identify any support needs for the child. The supervising social worker will share a copy of the supervision with the foster carer once it has been written up. In accordance with foster carers’ wishes, wherever possible, supervision will be carried out when Children In Our Care are away from the home so the foster carer feels able to speak freely and without distractions.

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## Tattooing and Piercings

Foster carers must not give permission for a Child in Our Care or young person to get a tattoo or piercing.

## Training, Support and Development Standards

The Training Support and Development Standards are a set of seven standards that set out the levels of competency foster carers need to reach within 12 months, or 18 months for Family & Friends Foster Carers, of being approved. A range of support and training courses will be provided by the Fostering Service to enable foster carers to evidence and achieve these standards and, after approval, new foster carers will be visited by the Fostering Service Training and Development Worker to agree a plan for the achievement of the TSD Standards. Foster Carers will be provided with a booklet in which to evidence that they have met the standards.

Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care Workbook

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/405891/foste r\_care\_tsd\_standards\_evidence\_workbook.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405891/foster_care_tsd_standards_evidence_workbook.pdf)

Training Support and Development Standards for Family and Friends Foster Care

Workbook

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standardshttps://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-family-and-friends-foster-carersfor-family-and-friends-foster-carers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-family-and-friends-foster-carers)

## Training

Within a foster carers first year, they are expected to complete all mandatory training requirements. This includes: Paediatric First Aid, Safeguarding, Managing Challenging

Behaviour (P.A.C.E), Health & Safety (including administering medication) and Risk Management and Safer Care. These are a minimum requirement of the fostering role and we encourage foster carers to attend other relevant training courses.

Redcar & Cleveland Children’s Services provides an extensive training programme for foster carers. Each foster carer will have access to their own account with The Foster Care Training Hub, which is the UK’s largest resource of CPD accredited courses, linked to the fostering standards. Alongside this, foster carers will also have access to ‘The Big Initiative’ which offer support and guidance on a range of parenting and lifestyle courses.

In addition to The Foster Care Training Hub, Redcar & Cleveland offer regular face to face training. Foster carers will be informed of the training topics available email.

Self-directed training such as reading relevant literature can also be included in a Personal Development Plan (PDP) and should be discussed this with the supervising social worker during supervision. Foster Carers should evidence their learning by completing a Self Directed Learning Outcome Review and returning it to the Training & Development Worker, Hannah Wiley.

Ongoing training and development activities are an essential part of the fostering role and carers are required, for their annual foster carer review, to be aware of the training attended in the previous year, be able to reflect on this training and the impact on their practice and identify any future training needs.

It is the individual foster carer's responsibility to apply for places on training programmes and if they recognise a need for particular training for themselves they should discuss this with their supervising social worker or the Training and Development Worker.

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## Unannounced Visits

Children’s Services are committed to ensuring that foster carers provide a high standard of care to the children and young people they provide placements to. To ensure this, and to comply with National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011, supervising social workers will make an unannounced visit to each foster carers home, at least twice a year. One visit may be undertaken by the usual supervising social worker and the other by another member of the fostering team.

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|  Refer: **Unannounced Visits Policy**   |

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## Viewpoint

Viewpoint is a way for young people to communicate their thoughts and feelings have have their voices heard within their Child in Our Care Review, allowing them to give their opinions and feedback on the issues that are important to them. Foster carers are expected to promote View Point with the child or young person they look after. For older children, foster carers may need to remind the young person to complete their CIOC review survey. Foster carers of younger children or children with a Special Educational Need may need to support or supervise the child in completing the survey.

For further support with Viewpoint, foster carers should speak to their Supervising Social Worker.

## Vulnerable, exploited, missing or trafficked (VEMT)

Through the impact of abuse and neglect Children In Our Care are more vulnerable to being exploited by others. It is, therefore, important for foster carers to understand that child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation is a very real risk to Children In Our Care and Care Leavers. Foster Carers need to be aware of the signs that a child is being groomed for sexual or criminal exploitation and should know the procedures if they have a concern.

In the event of a foster carer having a concern that a Child In Our Care is being exploited for criminal or sexual exploitation, they should inform the child’s social worker immediately and if the child or young person is at immediate risk of harm or danger, the foster carer should dial 999 without hesitation.

Prior to a placement being made, foster carers will be made aware of any risk of VEMT to the child. This local VEMT practioners’ group acts as a link to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), police and other organisations to ensure that children and young people who are VEMT, and those caring for them, get services and support to safeguard them. Foster carers should be made aware that the young person is VEMT so that they can work together with other professionals to help minimise the risks to the young person.

Further information:

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/children-families-and-safeguarding/safeguarding-children/vulnerable-exploited-missing-trafficked-vemt>

[Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan 2011](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180867/DFE-00246-2011.pdf)

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|  Refer: **VEMT Policy**  |

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## Whistle blowing

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council is committed to dealing responsibly with any genuine concern foster carers may have about malpractice in any form. There may be times when something regarding the fostering role is of concern to foster carers and they may not know how to air this concern.

Should a foster carer have highlighted concerns and they do not feel that they have been listened to, they have the right to take the matter up with senior managers or alternatively they can contact the whistleblowing help line on 01642 444333 or email whistleblowing@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk.

In addition anyone who has concerns about services registered by Ofsted (this includes the Fostering Service) can use the Ofsted ‘whistleblower hot line’.

The Ofsted whistleblower hot line can be contacted:

By telephone on 0300 123 3155 (Monday to Friday from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.)

By email at whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

In writing to: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M12wd

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| Refer to: **Whistleblowing Policy**  |