

Records and Recording Keeping

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter provides guidance for Foster Carers on providing clear and accurate records.

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1. Purpose of Recording

Everyone working with Looked After Children and their families is involved in recording.

Recording by Foster Carers has a number of important purposes including:

- Maintaining the history for the child or young person as a coherent narrative;
- Providing continuity for the child or young person;
- Helping to identify issues for the child or young person;
- Allowing analysis of patterns of behaviour, including the identification of improvements and problems at an early stage;
- Providing an opportunity to reflect on placement and learn from errors and build upon good ideas;
- Protecting the Foster Carer from allegations – this is particularly important if allegations/concerns are made known a long time after the alleged event;
- Highlighting a Foster Carer's training and development needs;
- Providing detail to assist Foster Carers who may be asked to attend Court;
- Providing information to enable the Foster Carer to contribute to Looked After Reviews, Care Team meetings, Child Protection Conferences and other meetings.

2. Recording Requirements

Foster Carers should keep a daily record for each child in placement. The Foster Carer Recording Form (Appendix 1) should be used.

On a monthly basis during the Foster Carer's supervision, the recording must be shared with the Supervising Social Worker, who will check a sample of the records. The recording should then be securely e-mailed or handed to the child or young person's Social Worker for their consideration and inclusion on the child or young person's file.

The Supervising Social Worker can provide any guidance necessary to support the Foster Carer, and ensure that the records are of a good standard.

- Foster Carers are encouraged to record electronically and email their recording to the child or young person's Social Worker using a password protection.
- For a small minority of Foster Carers who do not have a computer, records can be handwritten. Handwritten records should be passed to the Supervising Social Worker who will scan the documents to the child's Social Worker, and return the original records to the Foster Carer. If records are being handwritten, blank copies of the recording template can be printed, or provided by the Supervising Social Worker
- Daily recording should be produced within 48 hours and should be kept up to date.
- The Fostering Network estimate that daily recording should take on average between 5-10 minutes per day for each child or young person to complete, although this will vary.
- The child or young person should be aware of the existence of records and if appropriate, they should be aware of the contents.
- Parent and child Foster Carer's recording must be particularly precise, as developmental changes in the child and any change in parental care must be charted. The Foster Carer records form part of an assessment, and may be used in legal proceedings.

3. Key Issues and Events to Record

The following are the key issues and events to be recorded. The Foster Carer may have other points they wish to record in addition:

- Brief daily record about the child or young person.
- Improvements and achievements of the child or young person.

- Any changes or concerns in behaviour or mood (including details of behaviours observed and what was happening before it started).
- Dates and times when the child or young person is away from your care, including:
 - With friends;
 - Contact visits;
 - Missing from home;
 - With members of your support network/babysitters (details of who was caring for the child).
- Disagreements or complaints regarding any birth family members and how you responded to this.
- Accidents or injuries (however minor) to the child or young person. Describe what, where, when, and how it occurred. Note your actions and any witnesses to the accident. Note when you informed the child or young person's Social Worker.
- Medical, dental, and opticians appointments, treatments and the outcome.
- Contact with school, Social Worker, birth family and other professionals.
- Contact visits and the child or young person's response prior to, and afterwards.
- Details of any damage or destructive behaviours by the child or young person.
- Involvement with the Police, including reasons and outcome.
- Details of pocket money provided to the child or young person, and how the child or young person spent or saved their money.

4. Tips for Effective Recording

1. Before you start, be clear why you are recording.
2. Record as soon as possible.
3. Use plain language and avoid jargon, ensuring discriminatory language is not used.
4. Record facts.
5. When you give an opinion, separate it from the facts and indicate why you came to your opinion.
6. Record in a way that you would be happy for the child or young person and their birth family to read.
7. Use initials for the child or young person. If children in placement have the same initials, a second letter should be used so each child can be identified
8. Sign and date the recording

5. Recording by Long Term Foster Carers

When a child is matched permanently with a long term Foster Carer and they are settled, if all care team members are in agreement, including the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker, then instead of daily recording, the Foster Carer can complete a weekly summary. Sufficient detail must be provided on all the points listed in Purpose of Recording (Section 1).

The Foster Carer should ensure they provide dates for the seven day period covered by the summary.

The Foster Carer must provide more detailed recording of any important events.

The Supervising Social Worker can provide advice and guidance as necessary.

6. Keeping a Diary

Foster Carers should keep a diary to ensure they have a record of:

- Appointments for the child or young person;
- Contacts with children's services, including home visits;
- Dates of notable incidents;
- Dates the child is missing or not in their proper place;
- Home visits;
- Telephone calls;
- Note of any immunisations;
- Note of accident, incident, ill health or near miss.

Any of the above events that impact on a child or young person's development should be expanded upon in daily recording.

7. When a Child Moves Or a Foster Carer De-Registers

At the end of the placement, the Foster Carer's recording and any other documents relating to the child or young person must be returned to the child or young person's Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker can collect the documents and ensure they are passed to the child's Social Worker.

The Foster Carer should keep a record of the child or young person's name and placement dates, and when the recording and documentation was returned to the Service.

When a Foster Carer de-registers, the Supervising Social Worker will collect all documentation, identity cards, freedom cards, and the secure storage box.

8.Safe Storage of Records

All information relating to the children or young people in placement should be stored securely, and a locked box is provided by the Fostering Service for the safe storage of records, including diaries.

Information should only be shared with those who have the right to the information.

Photographs and other memorabilia should be treated as confidential information and only shared following discussion with the child or young person's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker

9.Security of Electronic Records

- Electronic recording and reports should be send by Egress, which is a secure email system.
- Foster Carers should keep copies of e-mails regarding the child or young person for the duration of the placement
- If Foster Carers hold children or young people's information on a personal computer, they must ensure that it is kept confidential and access to the information restricted to the Foster Carer. If other family members use the computer, files relating to fostering must be password protected.
- Once the child or young person moves on, information relating to the child or young person must be removed from the computer.
- When changing their computer, the Foster Carer should ensure that the hard drive is professionally wiped of all information.

10. The General Data Protection Regulation

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulates how we use information and protects individuals from misuse of their personal details.

The GDPR covers personal information such as names and dates of birth, as well as sensitive personal information such as health information, race or ethnic origin, religious beliefs and sexual orientation. The personal information can be on paper or in a computer file.

The GDPR means that we must be transparent about how we use personal information, and can only use it when we respect the rights of the children and young people whose information it is.

We must follow the 6 GDPR principles of good practice

- 1 **Lawfulness, fairness and transparency** (we must tell people how we will use their information)
- 2 **Purpose limitations** (we can only collect and use information in the way the person has been made aware of)
- 3 **Data minimisation** (we should only collect information which we need for the purpose)
- 4 **Accuracy** (we must keep our information accurate and up-to-date)
- 5 **Storage limitations** (we must only keep the information as long as we need to keep it)
- 6 **Integrity and confidentiality** (we should ensure appropriate security of the information we keep, protecting it being used in a way which does not meet the other GDPR principles, and against accidental loss, destruction or damage)

Durham County Council must comply with the GDPR.

Foster Carers hold information on behalf of Durham County Council, and the records belong to the County Council.



Durham County Council Fostering Service
Foster Carer recording form

See Records and Record Keeping procedure for guidance on foster carer recording

Name of Foster Carer.....
Child/young person's name (initials only).....
Date.....

Signed.....