

FOSTER CARERS HANDBOOK



Your **A-Z** guide
to **fostering**
in **Wirral**



Welcome

Congratulations and welcome to the Fostering Service. Now that you are an approved foster carer your journey begins and there is lots of support to assist you. The handbook provides you with immediate information that you may need and to use as an information guide.

The handbook is intended to compliment the support from your allocated supervising social worker, the fostering service and wider children services and partners.

If you have any questions or support needs, please do not hesitate to contact the fostering service.

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Introductions



Simone White
Director of Children,
Families and Education

This handbook has been produced to provide relevant information to Wirral Foster Carers as they progress through their fostering career. The content of this handbook has been shared with and agreed by a range of Foster Carers, Looked After Young People and Social Workers to ensure it is accurate and most of all a useful tool.

It is hoped that it will be a valuable resource to our Foster Carers, and we would, therefore, welcome feedback and ideas from you as to its contents and the accessibility of the information provided.

Welcome to the Wirral fostering family! We are so happy you have decided to become a foster carer for Wirral Council! There is a huge amount of support available from the fostering service as well as children's allocated social workers. You will receive regular training, support from your social worker, and access to peer support and forms to share experiences and collaborate in relation to service development. You have made a fantastically positive decision which will benefit and support some of our most vulnerable children and young people. Through offering children care, love and support you are in the perfect position to offer a very different experience of what it feels like to be 'cared for'.

Many of our children and young people have been traumatised through abuse and neglect and your work is an absolute essential part of supporting children to heal from their experiences, reaching their potential into adulthood. It's not just what you will be doing for our children, it's what they will be doing for you too!

Children bring so much love, warmth, energy, excitement, and creativity into our lives it is wonderful that you will be able to share in this through your work. Fostering is a wonderful job, a professional and vital career that you should feel proud to be part of. In my view there is no finer and more valued career in society, and I am so pleased you have made this choice.



Eifion Burke
Head of Service
Permanence and
Fostering



Cllr Sue Powell-Wilde
Chair of Children
Young People and
Education Committee

At Wirral Council we are committed to being a good corporate parent to all the children and young people who are looked after or care leavers.

All adults working for, and with us share the responsibility to help all our children and young people to stay safe and healthy, enjoy life, achieve their goals and to reach their full potential.

As a foster carer - whether providing long, short or emergency care - you will find everything you need in this handbook, and I hope you find it useful.

You have a vital role in the care and well-being of our looked after children and young people, and we want to ensure that you have everything you need to undertake this, and that you feel supported while working with us in this rewarding role.

Foster carers' charter

By signing this Charter, the Fostering Service, Wirral Council and registered foster carers agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the Charter in their actions.

The Fostering Service's Role

The fostering service aims to provide stable and high-quality foster care for children who are valued, supported, and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train, and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them.

The Foster Carer's Role

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service. We are assessed, trained, and supported to look after children and young people in a family setting. We provide them with stability, care, and an opportunity to grow and develop and to reach their potential.

Our working relationships are based on mutual trust and respect. This charter explains what we expect from each other.

What Foster Carers can expect from the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is committed to:

- Working in partnership with you
- Providing you with Information
- Being clear with you about decisions
- Providing you with Support
- Providing opportunities for learning and development
- Ensuring fair treatment for all
- Communicating effectively and consulting.

Working in Partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

We will:

- value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- recognise that you are the people who live with children every day and know them best
- include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for
- ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance.
- treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- respect confidentiality.

Providing Information

We know that information is vital for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's need.

We will:

- give you all the information you need to care safely for the child
- provide this information in writing at the time of the placement (except when it is an emergency placement and it is not feasible to do so, then we will provide this information as soon as possible)
- ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you at the time of the placements (except in emergencies where this will be done as soon as possible)
- provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlements
- provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures.

Being clear about Decisions

We recognise that for children to live a full family life, foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

We will:

- ensure that, wherever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- being clear about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.

Providing Support

We recognise that fostering is an isolating and challenging task. Appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care.

We will:

- respond positively to requests for additional support
- provide you with six weekly supervisions
- give you honest and open feedback
- provide you with access to 24-hour support
- pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- pay fees that reflect the task
- Ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.

Opportunity for Learning and Development

We believe that foster carers must be able to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they have the skills and knowledge they need and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

We will:

- provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support.

Ensure Fair Treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances.

We will:

- consult with you before changing terms and conditions
- ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you
- ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you be subject to an allegation
- provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our agreed timescales
- Ensure that you know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.

Effective Communication and Consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- facilitate regular communication between you, Councillor's and the Director of Children's Services
- ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- give you timely feedback from consultations.

What the Fostering Service can expect from Foster Carers

The fostering service aims to provide stable and high-quality foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them.

Foster carers are committed to:

- Working in partnership with the fostering service
- Respecting children in their care
- Sharing Information
- Individual learning, development and support
- Communication and consultation
- Promoting healthy lifestyles within and outside of the home environment
- Supporting the child/ young person to do well at school
- Supporting the child/ young person in their aspirations
- Working in partnership
- We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

We will:

- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- provide children with an experience of family life
- attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments
- attend the parents' evenings of children in our care
- show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow
- departmental policies and procedures
- respect confidentiality.

Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

We will:

- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability.
- provide children with an experience of family life.
- attend meetings about the children and young people we care for work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments.
- attend the parents' evenings of children in our care
- show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life.
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow.
- departmental policies and procedures
- Respect confidentiality.

Sharing Information

We believe that open and honest communication is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- inform our supervising social worker about changes in our household
- inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.

Individual Learning, Development and Support

We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need, and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster.

We will:

- be prepared to develop our skills throughout our fostering career
- attend relevant training
- take up opportunities offered to us
- let you know if we are unable to attend
- attend and contribute to support groups.

Effective Communication and Consultation

We believe that open and honest communication is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- respond to local consultations and discussion in order to inform the development of the service
- meet with Councillors', children's social care managers and staff and others in order to promote communication and a good working relationship.

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Abuse

This is something that causes actual harm or is likely to cause significant harm to a child. This harm may be in the form of physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.

- **Physical:** Includes children who are physically hurt or injured by being hit, shaken, squeezed, burnt and bitten. Also includes children who are being given alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison.
- **Emotional:** Includes persistent lack of affection; also includes where a child may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous or withdrawn.
- **Sexual:** Includes full Sexual Intercourse, Masturbation, Oral Sex, Anal Intercourse, Fondling and also showing children Pornographic material.
- **Neglect:** Includes the Health and Development of a child being impaired.

Protection from abuse is enshrined in law by [The Children Act 1989](#) and [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

The [Fostering Services Regulations 2011](#) prohibits Foster Carers from using corporal punishment towards any child placed in their care. This includes smacking, slapping, shaking, and all other humiliating forms of treatment and punishment.

The Fostering Service (including Foster Carers) is required to promote and safeguard the child's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Related topics - [Allegations, Managing Behaviour, National Minimum Standards for Foster Care, Safeguarding Children and Sanctions](#)

Accidents

Foster Carers are advised to record accidents on their diary sheet and let the child's Social Worker and person(s) with parental responsibility* know of any accidents a child might have. You should record when and how it happened, the outcome for the child, what action you took and who and when relevant people were told.

Foster Carers are also advised to seek medical advice if they are unsure if the accident may have caused an injury.

If the child has a serious accident or illness consent to medical treatment may be required. Once you have sought medical attention you will need to contact the child's Social Worker or Manager or the Duty Officer. If it is out of hours, the Children and Young People's Department's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or Police must be informed. Anyone with parental responsibility* must also be informed and consent sought if necessary.

A child aged 16 and over can sign or refuse their own consent and sometimes children under this age can sign for themselves if they have sufficient understanding.

Following this, Foster Carers must record the details as above on a Schedule 7 Events and Notification Form which can be accessed from the Wirral Council Fostering website.

Once you have completed this form you will need to email it to the child's Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and the Fostering Manager within 24 hours. A copy of the form will also be shown to an Inspector during an Ofsted Inspection.

**In some situations it may not be appropriate for Foster Carers to inform birth parents or people with parental responsibility. However, a discussion must take place with the person you notify in Children and Young People's Department to decide who will undertake this.*

Related topics - [Consents](#) and [Events and Notifications](#)

Activities

Foster Carers must give each child in their care encouragement and equal access to opportunities to develop and pursue their talents, interests, and hobbies. All children, including those children with disabilities, are to be supported to access as wide a range of activities as possible.

Related topics - [Consents](#) and [School Trips](#)

Adaptations

In some situations, the Children and Young People's Department will consider financial support for equipment or changes that may need to be made to your home to meet the needs of your foster child, including needs arising from a disability. Please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker, child's Social Worker or their Manager.

Related topics - [Disabilities](#) and [Finances](#)

Adoption

Adoption is where a new family is provided for children who can no longer live with their birth family. An Adoption Order transfers the child's legal relationship from their birth family to the new adoptive family.

Children/young people who are adopted change their surname name to that of their adoptive family and they receive a new birth certificate. Adopted children/ young people often stay in touch with their birth family, through either face-to-face contact or indirect letter box contact, if this is in their best interest.

For more information: **Adoption in Merseyside (AiM) website.**

Related topic - [Birth Certificates](#)

Advocate

An Advocate is a person who can help children and young people voice their views about their care. They can help a child to let professionals know when they have concerns or worries or do not agree with a decision that has been made about them. An advocate is not a Social Worker or a member of the Children and Young People's Department. They can attend meetings with the child, such as reviews, planning meetings or case conferences. If a child in your care wants more advice they can visit the **'Right Side of Care' website (Advocates)**.

Alcohol

As we know alcohol can have adverse effects on a person's wellbeing and ability to function. It is illegal to be drunk in charge of a child; therefore Foster Carers would be expected to only drink in moderation within the health guidelines. Foster Carers also need to take into consideration a child's previous experiences within their birth family and how drinking alcohol could be interpreted by a child.

Foster Carers are in a good position to advise young people about how to manage their alcohol consumption and the effects on their health. See the [Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents Policy](#)

Allegations

An allegation is a direct statement made by an individual. If a child or young person makes an allegation it will be taken very seriously, and they will be reassured that it was right to tell an appropriate adult. All allegations from whatever source should be reported to the Investigating Agencies e.g., the child's Social Worker, Integrated Front Door (IFD), Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or directly to the Police if the Children and Young People's Department cannot be contacted.

Related topics - [Abuse](#) and [Safeguarding Children](#)

Allegations Against Foster Carers

Allegations are sometimes made against Foster Carers. This places Foster Carers in a difficult and sometimes distressing situation; you will continue to be supported by your supervising social worker and the fostering service. Wirral Children and Young People's Department has a procedure that aims to deal with allegations against carers quickly, fairly, confidentiality and impartially. Independent support will be available and offered to foster carers through, Foster Talk. A referral to Foster Talk will be completed on your behalf by the fostering service.

See the [Allegations Against Foster Carers Procedure](#)

Allowances

Foster Carers are entitled to receive certain allowances to help them to look after the children/ young people in their care. Please ask your allocated supervising social worker for the most up to date foster carer allowances.

Related topic - [Finances](#)

Anti-discriminatory Practice

Wirral Council is committed to anti-discriminatory practice in every aspect of its work. Anti-discriminatory practice is concerned with the recognition and understanding of prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of Disability, Poverty, Race, Religion and Sexual Orientation. It involves providing services that do not compound stigma and prejudice but that actively promote equality and diversity.

Assessment

Foster Carers are often involved in assessing the needs of the children in their care. Information from Foster Carers can prove to be invaluable. Therefore, it is important that they keep a separate diary sheet for each child to record accurate facts or events in the child's life, both positive and negative. Children should be encouraged to read and to contribute to the diary sheet as this is a record of their life. A copy of the diary sheets should be emailed to the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker. If you require further advice and guidance in relation to diary sheets speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Related topic - [Recording](#)

Babysitting/Day Care

The Children and Young People's Department recognises that all carers, including Foster Carers need a break and occasionally foster children will have short periods of time being cared for by appropriate relatives or day care. Foster Carers are advised to consider carefully with whom their foster child is left in the care of

and those identified will be discussed and agreed with your supervising social worker, children and their social worker. Suitable adults identified will be named within the household safer care plan.

Bedroom Space

The Fostering National Minimum Standards (standard 10) requires each child over the age of three to have their own bedroom. If this is not possible the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by the child's Responsible Authority. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom the Fostering Service must take into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour and the wishes of the children concerned. The decision making process and outcome of the assessment will be recorded in writing where bedroom sharing has been agreed.

Further to this, any child aged eight and over must only share with a child of their own gender. Any child over 12 months must not share with an adult unless it has been advised that this is in the child's best interest or there is specific medical advice to do so.

Beds or furniture must not block the doorway to obstruct a child from getting out in the case of fire. The child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker will ask to see where the child is sleeping during their visits and this will be recorded in writing.

Bedwetting

Children or young people can experience episodes of bedwetting. It can be related to a health condition or an emotional response. A child placed in care will almost certainly feel distressed and it is important to be patient and allow the child time to settle and feel safe and secure.

Displaying annoyance or attempting to sanction the child may cause further distress.

Rewarding the child for success will work better than sanctions. If the problem persists, talk to the child's Social Worker, your Supervising Social Worker or the

Designated Nurse for Children Looked After. Persistent episodes could be a sign of a medical issue and/or specific support to be identified.

Related topic - [Designated Nurse for Looked After Children](#)

Belongings

Foster children will bring items of clothing, toys or other possessions with them when they come to stay. These belongings may not seem very valuable to an adult, but they are precious to a child and therefore should be treated with respect.

Remember the child will have been separated from their family and familiar surroundings, and what may seem an unimportant item to you may be a child's most treasured possession and hold some special memories. Sometimes children's belongings can be a good conversation starter, to get to know children, or for some children when placed in your care, they may not feel quite ready to talk about their treasured items, due to the emotional trauma and loss. Remember if children come with particular special items, for example a blanket, special t shirt etc it is best to check with children or social worker/supervising social worker, before washing, as this could cause upset if familiar smells/scents are then lost.

It is a good idea to keep an inventory of the children's belongings and add to this when items are purchased.

When children move on from foster placement their clothes must be packed in a suitcase or appropriate luggage bag. Other belongings should be packed carefully in boxes or plastic crates. Bin bags or plastic carrier bags must never be used as these are usually purchased for rubbish and children's belongings need to be treated with respect at all times.

It is a good idea to keep an inventory of the children's belongings and add to this when items are purchased.

When children move on from foster placement their clothes must be packed in a suitcase or appropriate luggage bag.

Other belongings should be packed carefully in boxes or plastic crates. Bin bags or plastic carrier bags must never be used as these are usually purchased for rubbish and children's belongings need to be treated with respect at all times.

Benefits

Some Foster Carers may be claiming state benefits; it is important for Foster Carers to know how fostering can affect these benefits.

Foster Carers need to be clear what benefits they can and cannot claim for their foster child. For example, you cannot claim child benefit but can claim Disability Living Allowance if appropriate.

For further advice, see the '[Citizen's Advice Wirral](#)' website

Birth Certificates

If foster carers do not have a copy of a child's birth certificate the foster carer should speak to the Child's Social Worker, who can make an apply for one.

Related topic - [Child's Name](#)

Birthday Presents

Foster Carers receive a birthday allowance for each child placed with them. It is paid automatically to purchase presents in time for the child's birthday. Depending on the age of the child, the child should have a say about what they want for their birthday.

If the child moves placement before their birthday and presents have been purchased, the presents and any money from the allowance which has not been spent must move with the child. If the allowance has been received but not spent, the allowance must be returned to the Fostering Service, as it will be paid to the child's new carer.

Related topic - [Finances](#)

Books

Foster Carers must provide an environment in which education and learning are valued. It is important that Foster Carers have age-appropriate books and toys available for the children in their care. Foster Carers should encourage their children to use the local library facilities. It is important that children are regularly read to by an adult to assist their interest and pleasure in books. Even children who are able to read alone, benefit from hearing someone else tell a story.

Related topic - [Homework](#)

Bullying

Bullying is a repeated action intended to hurt, threaten, intimidate, or frighten an individual who is unable to defend himself/herself.

Bullying is unacceptable as it creates insecurity, damages trust, and lowers self-esteem.

Bullying involves the abuse of power and can take many forms:

- **Physical:** Pushing, hitting, biting or use of violence
- **Verbal:** Name calling, teasing, spreading rumours
- **Emotional:** Hiding things, taking friends, threatening
- **Racist:** Racist comments, gestures, or graffiti
- **Sexual:** Abusive comments, inappropriate physical contact, and remarks

The following behaviours may be an indication that a child may be being bullied:

- Refusing to go to school, truanting or frightened of going to school
- Repeated episodes of feeling unwell or headaches
- Unexplained bruising or injury
- Loss of money or stealing
- Bedwetting or nightmares
- Child starts to become withdrawn and/or refuses to say what is wrong

- Child starts to become aggressive (maybe copying the behaviours by bullying others)

If this happens it is important to:

- Listen to the child; be patient, calm and sensitive
- Reassure the child that you believe them and will help them
- Record it on your diary sheet
- Contact the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker
- Play an important part in resolving the situation

All incidents of bullying will be investigated. The complaint will be recorded on the child's case file. When a bullying incident occurs, verbal or written reports will be made from speaking to all those involved, including witnesses.

The victim and the Foster Carers will be involved in the decision making about how the situation will be resolved. The Foster Carers and child's Social Worker will monitor and record the outcome of any strategy used.

The above process will happen if the child is the victim or the perpetrator of the bullying.

See [Bullying in Children and Young People's Setting](#)

CAMHS

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) offer a range of services:

- Therapeutic work for sexually abused children and their carers
- Therapeutic work for looked after children or their carers
- Therapeutic work for children and families in the community
- Therapeutic work for children 16-19yrs old
- Therapeutic work for children with complex special needs
- Involvement with the Youth Offending Team (YOT)

Many children will be supported by CAMHS and Foster Carers can also seek advice and consultation with this team. All therapeutic support will be discussed with the child's Social Worker and be recorded in children's individual care plans.

Car Seats

Foster Carers who are taking children out in their car must ensure that car seats are fitted and are suitable for the needs and age of the child. Seat belts are a legal requirement for all passengers. For more information about car seats visit Child Car Seats: [Carrying Children Safely](#)

Care Order

If a Court decides that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm through lack of adequate parental care or control, it can make a Care Order.

This means that the Local Authority will look after the child. A Care Order gives shared Parental Responsibility to the Local Authority and the child's parents.

The Care Order lasts until the child is 18 years old unless the child is Adopted or a Supervision Order, Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order is made, or the order is discharged.

Care Plan

Every child looked after must have a Care Plan. This is an agreement for looking after and meeting the child's current and future needs and outlines how Foster Carers and the Local Authority are meeting the five outcomes for children in relation to:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well being

This plan will be reviewed on a regular basis by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Foster Carers must have a written copy of the Care Plan for each child. If you do not, you must ask the child's Social Worker for one. Your Supervising Social Worker will discuss with you how you will fulfil your Foster Carer role within this plan and will be discussed at placement planning meetings.

Related topic - [Child's Review](#)

Care Proceedings

The Local Authority can instigate 'Care Proceedings' if they are very worried about a child and apply to the Court for a Care Order or Supervision Order.

Related topics - [Care Order](#) and [Children's Guardian](#)

Changes in Circumstances

The legal requirement to notify the Children and Young People's Department of changes in circumstances is within your Foster Care Agreement as follows:

- Foster Carers will provide written notice of changes to the child's care arrangements and seek agreement prior to any changes happening
- Foster Carers must not change the child's name or address to which they are placed or whom they live with in the household
- Foster Carers must not take the child out of school to go on holiday
- Foster Carers will give written notice by letter or email, to the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker of:
 1. Any intended change of address, including temporary and holiday addresses, emails, and contact numbers. These should include both the Foster Carer's change of address and if the child is to be cared for elsewhere, the temporary carers address. This written notice will include dates of the proposed changes
 2. Any change of composition in the household, with details and dates.

This includes any members of the household being away or people joining the household, including temporary arrangements

3. Any change (including temporary) in personal circumstances and any other events affecting either the capacity to care for any child placed or the suitability of the household
4. Any request or application to Adopt or apply for a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or for registration for child-minding or day care

Child Arrangement Order

Foster Carers can apply for a Child Arrangement Order for a child they have looked after if this is in line with the child's care and permanence plan. Certain conditions apply depending on time scales. Your child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker will be able to give advice about this.

Related topics - [Parental Responsibility](#) and [Permanence Planning](#)

Child Benefit

Child Benefit cannot be paid to anyone who is in receipt of a Fostering Allowance. Child Benefit is only payable if the carer has a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order for an individual child.

Child Development

Foster Carers must have knowledge of child development and attend training to enhance their understanding. Monitoring child development is important to ensure that children meet their 'development milestones' and foster carers can appropriately support and promote children with achieving identified outcomes.

Child Protection

Child protection refers to the activities undertaken to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child.

Related topic - [Safeguarding Children](#)

Child Protection Case Conference

An Initial Child Protection Case Conference (ICPC) is held when there is a concern that a child is at risk of significant harm. The conference brings together family members and those Professionals involved with the family.

The purpose of the meeting is to share information and decide whether there should be a Child Protection Plan. If the child's name is placed on a Child Protection Plan the Chair will make recommendations that will form the Child Protection Plan. A core group of people will also be agreed to implement the plan.

The core group will meet on a regular basis and the Child Protection Plan will be reviewed within set time scales.

Child Sexual Exploitation

The following information is taken from the NSPCC website:

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse when a child or young person is exploited they're given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities.

Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship. This is called grooming They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused.

Children and young people can be trafficked into or within the UK to be sexually exploited. They're moved around the country and abused by being forced to take part in sexual activities, often with more than one person. Young people in gangs can also be sexually exploited.

Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse to control them.

Anybody can be a perpetrator of CSE, no matter their age, gender, or race. The relationship could be framed as friendship,

someone to look up to or romantic. Children and young people who are exploited may also be used to 'find' or coerce others to join groups.

Types of Child Exploitation

CSE can happen in person or online. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through violence or blackmail before moving onto sexually abusing them. This can happen in a short period of time.

When a child is sexually exploited online, they might be persuaded or forced to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- film or stream sexual activities
- have sexual conversations

Once an abuser has images, video, or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.

Gangs use sexual exploitation:

- to exert power and control
- for initiation
- to use sexual violence as a weapon

Children or young people might be invited to parties or gatherings with others their own age or adults and given drugs and alcohol. They may be assaulted and sexually abused by one person or multiple perpetrators. The sexual assaults and abuse can be violent, humiliating and degrading.

Signs of Child Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be difficult to spot and sometimes mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour. Knowing the signs can help protect children and help them when they've no one else to turn to. There is specific training and will be a discussion with your supervising social worker.

Children Act 1989

The Act is one of the main legislations that places duties on English Local Authorities to safeguard and promote children's welfare. The act is important to foster carers and their role in caring for children and young people. The main principles of this act are:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- The best place for a child to be looked after is in their own families
- Birth parents should be involved whenever possible in all decision making and planning for their children
- Legal proceedings should be avoided where possible
- The welfare of the child should be promoted by partnership between the family and Local Authority
- Children should not be removed from their families, and contact should not be ended, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so for their well being
- Consideration must be given to the child's race culture, religion, language, and any disability

For more information: [The Children Act 1989](#)

Children's Guardian

When the Local Authority are concerned for a child's welfare and safety, they can make an application to the court for a child to be placed in their care. The court will then request Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to appoint a guardian.

The guardian's most important role is to make sure that local authority arrangements and decisions for and about children protect them, promote their welfare and are in their best interests.

In care proceedings, their job is to make independent enquiries and check the local authority's care plan to ensure that it protects children, promotes their welfare and is in their best interests. This will

include making sure that children are able to live with other family members or people connected to them or to be reunited with their parents if this can be made safe enough and is in their long-term best interest. It is also to let the court know what they think should happen.

For more information visit cafcass.gov.uk

Children's Inclusion Support Worker

Wirral employs a full time Childrens Inclusion Support Worker for children and young people aged 0-25 who have received or are receiving a service from the Children and Young People's Department.

Services provided include:

- Support, advice, and information
- Advocacy
- Children's rights
- Complaints
- Representing children's views locally, regionally, and nationally

See the '[Right Side of Care](#)' website

Children's Rights

Children have a right to be cared for in a nurturing environment, where their needs are met. They have a right to be respected and their wishes and feelings to be taken into account and included in any decisions made about them. This is enshrined in [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Foster Carers receive training, which includes communicating with children, complaints and advocacy as part of their induction and ongoing development.

Child's Name

Foster Carers cannot give permission to change a child's name. It is important that Foster Carers check that the name they know the child by is the name on their birth certificate. This is especially important when booking a holiday abroad as you may find that the child's passport

has a different name on it to the one you know the child by.

See the **Change of Name of a Looked After Child Procedure**

Related topics - [Birth Certificates](#), [Delegated Authority](#) and [Holidays](#)

Child's Review

All Children Looked After (CLA) will have a Care Plan that is reviewed within four weeks of coming into care, followed by a second review after three months, and thereafter at least at six monthly intervals.

The purpose of the Review Meeting is to agree the care plan is appropriate to meet the needs of the child and remains current as children grow up. There should be no surprises in the review, as all issues relevant to the Care Plan should have been discussed through care planning meetings with all those involved with implementing the plan.

The Review Meeting should be used to seek the views of the child, Foster Carers, parents, school, and anyone else who is involved with the child. Wherever possible, children, if they are of an age to do so should take part in the review, which is, after all, about them. Foster Carers are expected to encourage those children who are of an age and understanding to take part in their review; although for some children they may not wish to take part but their views, wishes and feelings will always be sought in other forms.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) may request to visit the child in care before the Review Meeting to consider their views, wishes and feelings. The IRO will also explain the review process. The Review Meeting will be chaired by an IRO and a written record of the meeting will be circulated to all those involved. It is important that foster carers promote and support children to meet with their IRO.

Foster carers attendance at children's review meetings are vital to share children's progress and all other relevant information.

Related topic - [Finances](#)

Clothing

Children in Foster Care must be well dressed and have clothing suitable for their age, the weather, school, leisure and bedtime. Children from an early age must have a say in what is bought for them, and their feet must be measured for the purchase of shoes, to ensure they fit properly. The Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker have a statutory duty to check the children's clothing on their visits to you.

If a child moves placement or returns home, their current clothes and the clothes they arrived with must go with them, in a suitcase or an appropriate bag. Please note it is important to retain any clothing that a child brings with them when they enter your care, if no longer appropriate the clothing should be washed and stored in a suitable bag until a further decision can be made about the clothing.

On occasions, the receiving Foster Carer may judge the clothing the child brings as inadequate. This must be brought to the attention of the Supervising Social Worker, or child's Social Worker. If this is the case, following discussion with the child's previous Foster Carer, the previous Carer may be asked to provide more suitable clothing for the child.

Related topics - [Finances](#), [Social Worker Visits](#) and [Supervising Social Workers Visits](#)

Complaints

Wirral Children and Young People's Department take all complaints seriously and have a clear complaints procedure. If you have an issue you wish to raise you may first want to discuss this with the child's Social Worker, Child's Social Worker's Manager or the Supervising Social Worker in an effort to resolve problems at an early stage. If you are not satisfied with the outcome a more formal complaint can be made by contacting the Complaints Officer.

See [Wirral's Complaints Policy](#)

Computers

It is expected that Foster Carers will provide the children in their care with access to a computer and the Internet. Schools communicate with children via the Internet and children without this facility are severely disadvantaged.

Wirral Children and Young People's Department have a protocol about the use of the Internet. Foster Carers must supervise the use of the Internet, have appropriate parental controls in place, and the computer must be accommodated within the household in a suitable place, which allows appropriate and agreed level of supervision.

Training is provided to Foster Carers about internet offending. Foster Carers are also advised if they do not already have computer skills themselves, to take up training opportunities to learn as part of their personal development plan.

See [Wirral's Internet Safety Policy](#)

Related topic - [Homework](#)

Confidentiality

Foster Carers must treat all personal information they have in the course of working with children and their families, as confidential. Obviously, information about the child must be communicated to the relevant people on a need-to-know basis, if in doubt speak to the child's Social Worker.

Foster Carers must not promise a child total confidentiality as sometimes information a child discloses must be shared, particularly in relation to child protection issues. Your supervising social worker can provide further support and guidance on this matter.

All written information you receive, and anything you write about children you care for must be kept in a safe secure and locked place. When a child leaves your care all the information relating to that child must be passed to the next carer. If the child returns home the information must be passed to the child's Social

Worker or your Supervising Social Worker. Foster Carers must not keep any information about a child that they are not caring for.

Related topic - [Recording](#)

Connected Carers (Family and Friends Foster Carers)

When a child needs to be accommodated by the Local Authority the first consideration is given to family, friends or significant people already known to the child. This is required by the Children Act 1989, as it is believed to reduce the emotional impact of separating a child from their usual care givers.

For Foster Carers this can complicate family relationships, as the children placed with them have to become their first priority, even when this may conflict with the relationship they have with the children's parents or previous care givers. Connected carers sign up to the same Foster Care Agreements and promote and support the child's care plan; the same as non-related carers would do. Connected carers have the same expectations and rights as non-related foster carers.

Consents

Foster Carers can sign for children to take part in no adventurous activities including school trips if:

- It has been discussed and agreed at the Placement planning Meeting, and the Foster Carer has a signed copy of the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record).

Or

- The Foster Carer has a consent form or letter signed by the parent or person with parental responsibility.

If you do not have either of the above, ask the child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker for advice.

Foster Carers cannot sign for adventurous activities or let the child take part in

adventurous activities without prior consent.

An adventurous activity is defined as:

'Where there is general agreement that an activity requires the person conducting the activity to have specific skills, knowledge and qualifications in order to reduce to a minimum the risks from undertaking that activity'.

The list below is not exhaustive but examples of adventurous activities:

- Abseiling
- Parachuting
- Archery
- Pony trekking
- Assault courses
- Power boating
- Canal boating
- Pot holing/caving
- Canoeing
- Quad biking
- Cycling
- Quasar laser
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- Games
- Fencing
- Rafting
- Flying
- Rock climbing
- Gliding
- Rowing
- Hang gliding
- Sailing
- Helicopter rides
- Shooting
- Hill walking
- Skiing
- Horse riding
- Snorkelling
- Hot air ballooning
- Swimming where there are no attendants
- Ice-skating
- Indoor rock climbing
- Sub aqua

- Judo/wrestling
- Tobogganing
- Mountain biking
- Trampolining
- Motorcycling
- Water-skiing
- Orienteering
- Weightlifting

If a child is going to take part in an adventurous activity, including if Foster Carer's are taking a child on holiday and think it is likely it may involve adventurous activities; Foster Carers will need written permission for the child to take part.

The child's Social Worker will need to be contacted to make arrangements for obtaining the signature.

When a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order is made the holder of the order can consent to activities and medical treatment.

See **Wirral's Delegation of Authority Policy**

Related topic - [Overnight Stays](#)

Consents for Medical Treatment

A Foster Carer will have a signed copy of the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record) and Delegation of Authority for medical consent which allows the Foster Carer to sign and give consent to immunisations, dental check-ups and eye tests, etc.

The Foster Carer must keep this documentation safe and produce it whenever necessary.

Specific treatment will need either the child themselves if old enough, or the parent or appropriate person with parental responsibility to sign. They will need to know precisely what treatment is being advised and by whom. What the treatment will involve, what risks or side effects are possible, expected care needed following the procedure, for how long and by whom.

See [Wirral's Consent to Medical Treatment in Foster Care Placements Procedure](#)

Contact/Family time

A child's contact with his or her family is most important, and Foster Carers must encourage children to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as outlined in the Placement planning meeting and the Care Plan.

There should always be a clear understanding with the Foster Carer from the outset about the child's continuing relationship with their parents and other family members/significant others. Foster Carers should enquire with the child's Social Worker, or their Supervising Social Worker, about contact arrangements before the placement begins to ensure that they will fit with the carers' circumstances. Delegated Authority in relation to contact should be discussed as part of the Placement Planning Meeting and Foster Carers should receive written contact arrangements, this is usually within the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record), but any changes may be given separately.

Foster Carers are expected to take and collect the child from contact. Exceptions to this would be if the young person is old enough to make their own way to the contact, if the Foster Carer is required to take another foster child to a different location, if the Foster Carer has an emergency or it is deemed that the Foster Carer would be at risk from the person the child is having contact with.

Foster Carers are advised to ask before the child is placed about contact arrangements to ensure arrangements are made to enable carers to carry out their responsibilities around contact. This may include supervising contact in their home or elsewhere, which would be discussed and agreed in the first instance. A record of contact should be kept by the Foster Carer on diary sheets and children should be encouraged to contribute, age permitting.

Prevention of contact cannot be used as a sanction. Foster Carers must attend training about contact as part of their induction and ongoing development.

See [Wirral's Contact Procedure](#)

Contacting Children and Young People's Department

- **By phone**

The Social Worker for the child will give you their contact number. You will also have your Supervising Social Worker's direct line, mobile number and the team number. If you cannot contact them directly you can ask for the Duty Officer. All Social Work Teams have a Duty Officer. You can leave a message with the team clerk or the person who answers the phone. Leave your name, telephone number and brief details of what you are ringing about.

Out of office hours you will need to contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or the Police.

- **By email**

Managers and all Social Workers have email. Usually, their address is their first name and surname 'their name'@wirral.gov.uk - (all lower case).

As you know, Social Workers are not office based and work with multiple children and their families. There will be times when your child's Social Worker is not available. However, you can contact them as described above. It is important that you leave a message or put your requirements clearly in writing to ensure your child's Social Worker or Supervising Social Worker understands what you need.

Contraception

The Children and Young People's Department has a policy which describes Foster Carers responsibilities in relation to sexual health and contraception.

See [Wirral's Personal Care and Relationships Procedure](#)

If you want advice about sexual health matters or contraception in relation to your foster child, you should speak to your supervising social worker and child's social worker. Support and guidance are also available from health services; however, initial discussions should take place with the child's social worker and supervising social worker.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is a term used when physical force is used which is intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort. Foster Carers must not use any form of physical force with children and corporal punishment is not an option in any circumstances.

Related topics - [Managing Behaviour](#) and [Sanctions](#)

Data Protection

This legislation regulates the handling of personal data. This allows the Children and Young People's Department to share information with Foster Carers when appropriate.

It also requires Foster Carers to keep information confidential and only to share on a need to know basis. Your supervising social worker can provide guidance on this matter.

Days Out

Foster Carers are encouraged to take children for days out, in and away from Wirral without prior consent unless it involves adventurous activities.

Related topic - [Consents](#)

Delegated Authority

Delegated Authority refers to the arrangement of responsibilities held by a person with parental responsibility which will be met by the Foster Carer. The level of the Foster Carer's decisions and consents should be considered at the

child's Placement Planning Meeting and during supervisory visits.

ALL FOSTER CARERS SHOULD HAVE A COPY OF DELEGATE AUTHORITY.

If a Foster Carer is unsure of their level of decision-making responsibilities, they should contact their Supervising Social Worker or the Child's Social Worker.

See [Wirral's Delegation of Authority Policy](#)

Designated Nurse for Children Looked After

The Designated Nurse for children looked after has a responsibility to ensure all children looked after have their health needs met. The Designated Nurse is available for advice to both children and Foster Carers and will ensure that a child's health assessments are carried out within the agreed statutory timeframes.

Related topic - [Medicals](#)

Diary Sheets

Diary sheets are records which are completed by Foster Carers on a daily, weekly or monthly basis dependent on the length of placement and agreement with their supervising social worker, they should provide an accurate picture of the child/ young person's placement and allow progress to be monitored. Foster Carer recording is very important in understanding the child/ young person's needs and helping to put an effective plan in place. Foster Carers should add in quotations any views or direct comments made by a child about how they are feeling. Drawings from children should also be added to diary sheets.

Related topic - [Recording](#)

Dinner Money

Whilst the child is in foster care the Foster Carer is responsible for the payment of dinner money, even if the child was receiving free dinners before being looked after.

Disabilities

Children with disabilities may need specialist care. Carers may need specific training to meet those needs, which will be provided for by the Department. Please discuss your training needs with your Supervising Social Worker.

Related topic - [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#)

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

DLA is a benefit for children with disabilities. It is for people who need help looking after themselves and those who find it difficult to walk or get around. It is divided into two parts:

- **Care component** - for help with personal care needs
- **Mobility component** - for help with walking difficulties and supervision of some children when in the community

You can be paid either the care component or the mobility component on its own, or both at the same time. DLA is for the child and not for the parent or carer.

If you get DLA for a child, you must inform the child's social worker and supervising social worker, and it must be paid into a separate account open for this purpose and not be used to pay for something that we would normally expect you to provide from your Foster Care Allowance.

The way in which you use the DLA will depend on the individual child's needs. Agreement for expenditure will be a joint discussion with the child's Social Worker and needs to be agreed by senior management. As the appointee you are expected, by the DWP, to use the award to support the child and to save any surplus for the child to use in the future. Foster Carers will need to record how this money is used and be able to account for all transactions.

This allowance is the child's entitlement and if the child moves placement the

money from this account must go with them. The DWP is responsible for monitoring the use of DLA. You may wish to contact the DLA general enquiries helpline (0845 712 3456), to clarify any situations. If the Fostering Service suspects DLA monies are being used inappropriately, we will ask the DWP to investigate.

When a young person reaches 16 years of age, the DLA will change to PIP (Personal Independence Payment) young people will have this paid directly to them unless they require an appointee to manage their affairs.

Advice for making a Disability Living Allowance claim and help with any problems, see the '**Citizen's Advice Wirral' website**

Diversity and Identity

Any form of discriminatory practice is not permitted. Carers should challenge any form of discrimination in an acceptable manner.

All children should be encouraged and helped to understand, enjoy, and take a pride in their ethnic origin and cultural heritage. For Foster Carers to do this they will need an understanding and awareness of the child's ethnic origin and cultural background and provide the child with opportunities where they can develop their own identity. Foster Carers must be aware of particular needs in relation to health, self-care and diet in relation to religious and cultural requirements.

Foster Carers must attend training in valuing diversity to meet the requirements of the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers. Where a child is placed from a different ethnic or cultural background to themselves, carers will be expected to attend specific training to ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of the child.

Drug Abuse

Wirral Drug and Alcohol Action Team is a partnership of Agencies, which include representatives from organisations such as Health, Police, Probation Service, Merseyside Voluntary Agencies and Wirral Council's Education, Youth and Children's Services. Working with these organisations, Wirral DAAT is responsible for meeting the targets of the Government's National Drug Strategy, which are to:

- Prevent today's young people from becoming tomorrow's problematic drug user.
- Reduce the availability of illegal drugs
- Reduce drug-related crime and its impact on communities. County Lines
- Reduce drug use and drug related offending through treatment and support
- Reduce drug-related death through harm minimisation

Duty Officer

All Social Work Teams have a Duty Officer. If you cannot speak to your child's Social Worker or Supervising Social Worker and you need immediate advice or to leave important information, ask to speak to the Team Duty Officer.

You can also email your enquiry to the Team Manager or Social Worker.

Related topic - [Contacting the Children and Young People's Department](#)

Education

Many children who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority can suffer disadvantages in almost all areas of their lives.

A sound education plays a key role in ensuring that young people become successful in later life. Poor experiences of education and care can contribute to social exclusion in later life.

Wirral Council places a high priority to meeting the educational needs of all children in Foster Care and ensure that they are encouraged to attain their full potential.

One way in which this is addressed and monitored is through the use of a Personal Education Plan (PEP) to ensure that key figures in the child/young person's life get together to discuss the educational issues affecting the child/young person's school life and level of attainment. Each child looked after must, by law, have a PEP. It is the Social Worker's responsibility to ensure that this is completed and is a vital part of children's Care Plans.

In Wirral, a Designated Teacher in the school which the child attends has the responsibility for writing the plan. This should result from joint planning between the Foster Carer, the child/young person, the Social Worker and the Designated Teacher. The Foster Carer's contribution to this process is vital.

The partnership formed between the school's Designated Teacher for looked after students and the carer is the only practical way to ensure that a good education can be delivered to these young people who are experiencing disrupted lives. It is important for the Foster Carer to be ambitious and have a key role in ensuring that the children get the best out of their education.

Foster Carers take their foster children to school and collect them unless the children are old enough to go on their own. Foster Carers should attend parents'/guardians' evenings/open days, in conjunction with the birth parent where appropriate.

Foster Carers should introduce themselves to the child's class teacher in primary school or make contact with the school's Designated Teacher for looked after students in secondary schools. The Designated Teacher may name another teacher in the school as the main point of contact to help to resolve any day-to-day issues, which arise for the child in school.

Foster Carers must provide an environment in which education and learning are valued. This involves a suitable area in the home to study and IT equipment to support their learning.

Foster Carers must establish an expectation of regular attendance at school, supporting the child's full participation through provision of necessary uniform and equipment. They should support the children with their homework and encourage school trips and after school activities. Foster Carers must have the necessary information promoting education as part of their induction and ongoing development.

If the Foster Carer is asked to take a child home or keep the child off school without a formal exclusion, the Foster Carer must contact the Designated Teacher. If a child is formally excluded the Foster Carer must contact the Designated Teacher and the child's Social Worker for guidance.

See the [Foster Carers Supporting Educational Potential Procedure](#)

For Children looked who want to go on to study at university, there is additional support for any young person choosing this route of further Education, this includes financial and pastoral support, information is available through the chosen university.

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

The Emergency Duty team consists of one or two Social Workers on duty at any one time. They are available out of office hours. Their role is to deal with urgent situations, which cannot be left until the next working day. If the EDT Social Worker is not available and a child is at immediate risk, please ring the Police.

Emergency Duty Team - 0151 677 6557.

Events and Notifications

In line with Foster Care Regulations Foster Carers must inform the Children and Young People's Department of any of the following events:

- Death of a child
- Serious illness or accident of a child
- Outbreak of any infectious disease
- Allegation that a child placed with Foster Carers has committed a serious offence
- Involvement or suspected involvement in Child Sexual Exploitation of a child placed with Foster Carers
- Serious incident necessitating the Police being called to the foster home
- Absconding by a child placed with Foster Carers
- Serious complaint about a Foster Carer approved by the Fostering Agency
- Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with a Foster Carer
- Any intended change of address, including temporary or holiday addresses
- Any changes in composition of the household
- Any other change in personal circumstances which affects ability to care for the child
- Any request or application to adopt or register as a child minder

Your supervising social worker will provide guidance and further information.

Family Group Conferences

These are set up by a Coordinator, with a child, his/her family and friends, and anyone involved with the family. The purpose of the meeting is to develop a plan for the child's future. The aim is to give families a central role in decision making whilst still ensuring that children and young people are safe.

These meetings are usually in three parts:

Part 1 Information Giving

The child, family, friends, and anyone involved with the family, say what they think about the situation and what help they can offer. Additional information can be asked for from workers with the family. The family and friends are then left alone to discuss the situation.

Part 2 Private Family Time

The child, family and friends then work out who needs to do what and work out how the plan can work. The Coordinator can be asked to join if information or refreshments are needed.

Part 3 The Plan

The Coordinator then discusses the plan with the child, family and friends to ensure it is clear and agreed by everyone at the meeting. If the coordinator does not think it will keep the child safe, the group may be asked to adjust the plan.

Once the final plan is agreed, those involved will work together to put the plan into action and agree how and when the plan will be reviewed.

Family Toolbox

Familytoolbox.co.uk is a free online hub to help Wirral families be the strongest they can be. It has been designed with families across Wirral and has loads of information about everyday family life to share, to help boost your confidence and skills and develop that vital bounce-back ability.

Finances

Foster Care Allowances are paid by directly into the foster carers bank or building society, fortnightly in arrears. The level of payment is reviewed once a year and carers are sent written confirmation of changes.

Related topics - [Consents](#) and [Education](#)

- **Educational Trips**

An application for the cost of field trips and residential courses which are an integral and necessary part of the child's school curriculum can be requested as part of the Personal Education Allowance and discussed as part of the PEP.

Foster Carers are expected to meet the clothing/equipment needs of the child for holidays and trips from the weekly allowance and/or the annual holiday allowance.

- **Equipment**

Newly approved Foster Carers are provided with 'setting up equipment' needed for the children that carers are registered for. This would include items such as a bed, combination wardrobe, car seat, cot, buggy, sterilizer, highchair and bedding. There is however a price limit on what the Local Authority will pay. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker. Foster Carers can choose their own equipment up to the value agreed and request money in advance. Foster Carers must provide receipts once the items are purchased. Foster Carers will be required to meet the additional costs over and above the price limit agreed by the Local Authority.

Replacement equipment can be requested if the Foster Carer does not receive a fee above Band 1.

When requesting specialist equipment, e.g. a requirement arising from disability this should be agreed with the Team Manager at Wirral Fostering Service.

- **Fees**

Wirral Foster Carers are rewarded through the payment of fees that recognises the skills they have. This fee scheme allows carers to progress through levels, and on achieving each level, receive a higher rate of payment. Each level is referred to as a band.

- **Foster Care Allowance**

This is paid for each child, the weekly amount depending on age. Children who are looked after are also entitled to a

number of additional allowances such as holiday grant and festival allowance (e.g. paid for the purchasing of a Christmas present), and birthday gift.

- **Initial Clothing**

An allowance of up to £200 can be paid for each child and will be a discussion with your supervising social worker. Please note this amount is usually only paid once during each care episode as the fostering allowance contains an element for clothing replacement. The allowance paid

must allow the carer to purchase sufficient and appropriate clothing for the child. Carers may choose to use the allowance initially in part, using the remainder at a later date.

If needed, Foster Carers can ask for an emergency payment to meet immediate initial clothing needs.

- **Religious Festival Presents**

Foster Carers receive an allowance for each child placed with them. It is paid automatically prior to the festival.

Depending on the age of the child, the child can have a say about what they would like as presents. This allowance must not be used for the purchase of clothing.

If the child moves before the presents have been purchased, the presents and any money from the allowance which has not been spent must move with the child. If the allowance has been received but not spent, the allowance must be returned to the Fostering Service, as it will be paid to the child's new Foster Carer.

- **Tax**

All Foster Carers are defined as Self-Employed by the Inland Revenue.

If you want any help or advice the business adviser at the Inland Revenue will be pleased to assist you. It may be helpful to look at the Inland Revenue website.

- **Travel Expenses**

For details on travel expenses - see [Guide to Foster Carers Payments](#)

First Aid

All Foster Carers are expected to attend a First Aid course as part of their pre-approval training prior to children being placed in your care and to attend refresher training to ensure practice remains current. A certificate of attendance is required to complete the Training Support and Development Standards portfolio.

Related topic - [Medication](#)

Foster Care Agreement

The Fostering Service Regulations require Foster Carers to sign a Foster Care Agreement before commencing fostering. This will ensure that carers have a full understanding of what they can expect from the Local Authority and the expectations the Local Authority have of Foster Carers. If you do not have a Foster Care Agreement, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker or contact the Fostering Service admin team.

Note: The Foster Care Agreement requires Foster Carers to notify the child's Social Worker or their Manager and their Supervising Social Worker or their Manager, of any changes in circumstances immediately.

Related topic - [Changes in Circumstances](#)

Foster Carer Reviews

Regulations for Fostering Services require Foster Carers to be reviewed at least annually. Your first review is presented to the Fostering Panel. The Fostering Panel also has a responsibility for considering reviews in particular circumstances e.g. five-year review, any complaint or allegation and deregistration. Foster Carers are invited to attend the Fostering Panel when their assessment or review is being presented.

All other reviews are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This is usually undertaken in the Foster Carer's own home at a time to suit the Foster Carer. If carers disagree with the outcome, they can put their complaint in writing to the Team Manager of the Fostering

Service within 28 days of the decision. Arrangements are then made for the Fostering Panel to consider the registration and complaint. The outcome will be confirmed in writing. Alternatively, Foster Carers can apply to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) for them to consider their registration. The IRM will make a recommendation back to the Authority. The Agency Decision Maker will then consider their recommendation and make the final decision about the Foster Carers registration.

Foster Talk

Foster Talk is a National Organisation that gives, advice training and support to Foster Carers. Carers subject to an allegation will be referred to Foster Talk for independent support.

Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is a National Organisation that gives advice, training and support on issues relating to fostering. All foster carers have the opportunity to be members of the Fostering Network upon being approved by the Agency Decision Maker. Your supervising social worker can further advice on this matter.

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel has responsibility for approving, reviewing and monitoring Foster Carers and the Fostering Service. The panel consists of:

- An Independent Chairperson who is not employed in any other capacity by the Local Authority
- Elected Members
- A Social Worker Representative of the Children and Young People's Department
- A Foster Carer registered with another Local Authority
- Independent Representatives
- An Agency Panel Advisor
- Access to Medical and Legal Advice

Foster Carers are invited to attend the Fostering Panel, along with their Supervising Social Worker, when their assessment or review is being presented.

Fostering Services Regulations 2011

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 is the Legal Framework that governs all Fostering Services. These regulations are mandatory and all Fostering Service Providers, including Foster Carers, must comply with them.

Any Inspector of Fostering Services would look at how these and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services are complied with.

Health

Foster Carers have a duty to ensure that all the health needs of a child in their care are met. Before a placement begins the carer is provided with as full a description as possible of the child's needs, and the procedures giving consent for the child to receive medical treatment. Carers can sign for ongoing, non-emergency treatment if they have a letter signed by the Senior Manager which they should receive when the child is placed, if the child is subject to a care order. Parents can delegate consent which will be recorded in the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record) for the child and Designated Consent Tool.

There needs to be a clear understanding of any specialist health needs prior to placement. The carer is provided with a written record for children placed in their care. This is updated during the placement and moves with the child. It is the Foster Carer's responsibility to complete the child's appointment record and the child's medication record forms as and when necessary. If a child moves to another placement the Foster Carer is responsible for ensuring any outstanding appointments are relayed to the Foster Carer who is now looking after the child. They should also tell

the relevant Health Professional of the change of placement address.

Children who are looked after should also have a Health Care Plan which outlines their health needs and makes clear who has responsibility for ensuring that these needs are met. The carer needs to be clear about their role. This includes:

- Registering a child with a Doctor and Dentist when necessary
- Taking the child to any health appointments including dental and optician
- Helping the child to access the services they need
- Giving attention to health issues and everyday care of the child, including personal hygiene, nutrition and sexual health
- Acting as an Advocate on their behalf
- Providing activities and opportunities for children in their care to pursue hobbies interests

Wirral has Designated CLA Nurses who can offer advice. Schools also have a Nurse available to give advice to pupils, parents, and Foster Carers.

Related topic - [Designated Nurse for Looked After Children](#)

Health and Safety

Foster Carers have a duty to promote and safeguard the child's physical, mental and emotional welfare. The home and immediate environment must be free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contains safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age and development and level of ability. Health and Safety Checks are reviewed annually by the Supervising Social Worker and will be discussed in the annual review. Any changes or concerns relating to health and safety should be reported to your supervising social worker without delay.

Health Care Plan

Every child in care is required to have a written Health Plan which is part of the child's Care Plan which should be regularly reviewed.

Related topic - [Health](#)

Holidays

It is expected that children in care will go on holiday with their Foster Carers as part of the family. This is particularly the case with children in long term care. If you are planning a holiday discuss this with the Child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker, as permission will have to be sought. Holidays must be taken during school holidays for children of school age. If a child is to go on holiday/have time off school, permission must be sought prior to arrangements being made due to exceptional circumstances and have to be formally agreed in writing from the Head of Service.

When you have decided on the holiday you must put the details in writing to the child's Social Worker or their Manager and your Supervising Social Worker or their Manager, the dates you are away, the address you will be staying and a contact number. You will also need to submit copies of any travel insurance obtained for Children Looked After in your care.

When booking a holiday abroad please ensure that you have all the correct documents. This includes ensuring that any travel documentation details the child's name as shown in his or her passport. Failure to do so might mean that the child might be refused the right to travel.

It is unusual for Foster Carers to take a holiday without the children in their care, especially if the children are placed long term with them, as these children are very much part of their family. Although the department does recognise that in certain circumstances Foster Carers might need to take time 'off' from their

caring role. Foster Carers have an annual entitlement of 2 weeks respite.

Foster carers should discuss any proposed plans that involve alternative care arrangement being made for children. Supervising Social Worker and children's social workers need advance notice of the planned holiday.

Foster Carers should not consider taking holidays during the Christmas period as the service would not provide an alternative placement for the child.

Related topic - [Foster Care Agreement](#)

Homework

Foster Carers have a responsibility to help the children in their care reach their full educational potential. Carers should encourage the young people to do their homework and must provide a quiet space and time for the child to study. In many instances this may involve carers sitting with and helping the children. Carers should ensure that children have access to libraries and provide any books and equipment needed.

Foster Carers will be required to have a good understanding of internet safety and undertake the training available if required.

Identity

It is essential that a child develop a sense of his or her own identity. Foster Carers can assist in many ways including promoting contact with family and friends, keeping records, photographs, and childhood mementos. Carers must also help the child to compile a life storybook, which the child's social worker will discuss. . At all times the Foster Carer must take into account the child's race, religion, sexual orientation and culture. Foster Carers must develop an understanding of the child's race, religion, sexual orientation or culture if it is different to their own.

Related topic - [Diversity](#)

Independence

Preparation for adult life is something that we require as a standard in foster care. Foster Carers should provide all children in their care with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning the skills necessary to prepare them for the responsibilities for adulthood.

This should include:

- Providing opportunities to help young people to manage their money, plan their finances and understand about the costs of utilities and other services. Children are provided with a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding and should have their own bank account.
- Supporting children to develop the range of self-care and practical skills that will be needed as they make the move to greater independence – including capacity to budget for, plan and prepare nutritionally balanced meals, prepare for the world of work or further education, self-care and social presentation.
- Enabling children to develop basic housekeeping and household maintenance skills including shopping, buying, storing, preparing and cooking food, washing clothes, personal self-care and understanding and taking responsibility for personal health care.

Children are encouraged and enabled to choose their own clothing and personal requisites and to buy these through normal shopping arrangements. Younger children are accompanied by the Foster Carer or others and older children are given the choice of shopping alone or with the guidance of their Foster Carer.

Children who are leaving care will have a Pathway Plan and an allocated Personal Advisor. The Pathway Plan outlines the transition from foster care to independent living. Foster Carers have an important role in ensuring children have the necessary skills when planning for the next steps of living independently successfully.

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for fostering is part of a wider package of measures to improve the approvals process for Foster Carers and to encourage more people to come forward to foster.

The IRM is not an appeal process, the function of the panel is to review all the documents and information relating to a 'qualifying determination' and make a recommendation to the Fostering Service Provider about whether or not a person is suitable to act as a 'Local Authority Foster Carer' and/or a recommendation about the terms of approval as the case may be. The final decision about the individual's approval will continue to rest with the Agency Decision Maker.

Independent Visitor

Independent visitors are volunteers who work with children and young people. The child's social worker can arrange a referral to Barnardo's if required.

Inspections

Fostering services are inspected regularly. Foster Carers are sent a questionnaire to complete before each inspection. Foster Carers can have an opportunity to meet with inspectors on request, or the inspectors may request to see them.

Insurance

Foster Carers should inform their household and car insurers upon being approved as a foster carer.

If you are aware that a child placed in your care has a history of fire setting you must speak to your Supervising Social Worker or Team Manager of Wirral Fostering Service as extra cover might be needed.

Related topic - [Foster Care Agreements](#)

Looked After Child Documentation

The CLA system is designed to keep the welfare of the child paramount. The child is listened to and consulted about how their needs are met and how their future is planned for. It is intended to promote partnership working and clarity to the roles and responsibilities of all those involved with the child and the part they play in making a success of plans for the child whilst they are looked after. It is intended to ensure all children are able to reach their potential.

These are the forms that are completed and continually updated when a child comes into care. Although the responsibility for completion lies with the child's Social Worker, Foster Carers are also expected to contribute to them. These forms are:

Referral and Risk Assessment

Provides specific and detailed information about a child and circumstances why they are not able to remain living with their family. Key information about all aspects of a child's life and a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure all appropriate support is identified for each child to achieve their full potential whilst being supported and protected by the foster carer. The referral form is part of the matching process to ensure foster carers are fully informed and can fully meet a child's individual needs.

Chronology

Is a comprehensive record of significant events that have occurred during a child's life. A chronology is an important document that enables foster carers and other professionals to view a sequence of events, key relationships in a child's life and also can provide insight into behaviours, which might coincide with a significant event in a child's life. Chronology is also an important tool for children's life story work.

The Placement Agreement

Also known as the Placement Plan – provides information about a child's everyday routines, health, education and identity needs, and arrangements for family time/contact. This must also include details of activities the child might do with the foster family and with school, and agreement given to Foster Carers to sign consent forms for adventurous activities and delegated authority.

Care Plan

This clearly states the objectives for the care of the child and the strategy for achieving them. Foster Carers play a full part in ensuring the best possible outcome can be achieved.

Review Record

This informs the child's review that the placement and agreed objectives continue to meet the child's needs. It identifies the work to be undertaken and by whom to achieve progress for the child.

Consultation Documents

These are helpful to children and Foster Carers when sharing/presenting information to a review.

Looked After Children Educational Service (LACES)

This is the Looked after Children Educational Service. This service consists of a team of Teachers and Mentors. Its responsibility is to oversee the attainment and educational progress of children in care and identify appropriate support. They are also available to Foster Carers for advice. The priority for this service is to work with Foster Carers to help them to support children to achieve their potential.

Related topic – [Education](#)

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The Local Authority Designated Officer is informed of all allegations against

professionals, including Foster Carers that come to the attention of the department. The role of the LADO is to:

- Be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases
- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- Liaise with the Police and other Agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair process

An allegation or concern is where a person is alleged to have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

Life Story Work

Life story work supports and promotes children to hear, learn and understand their individual journey; gain factual information about events that they may or may not have memories of. Life story work has many purposes including children learning about and forming their individual identity; supports therapeutic parenting in understanding children's trauma and loss and applying agreed behaviour management strategies to support children.

Life story work requires sensitive planning and specific training to ensure children are fully supported throughout their life story journey, and foster carers feel confident in their role. The child's Social Worker will discuss life story work with Foster Carers and your important role. Life story work can be gathered and displayed in many forms and begins when the time is right for the child. Photographs and

memories saved by foster carers will form part of children's journey's and is another reason for the importance of diary recordings, photographs and memorabilia being kept and updated.

As part of induction and ongoing development, Foster Carers have access to specific training on the importance and preparation of life story work.

Related topic - [Identity](#)

Mainstream Foster Care

Mainstream foster carers are recruited carers who apply to be approved foster carers and can care for children from 0-18 years, which is agreed following the foster carer assessment. Foster Carers on this scheme build up their skills and knowledge of caring for children and sibling groups who become looked after either in an emergency during office hours or in a planned way.

Foster Carers work closely with rehabilitation plans to improve the chances of a child returning home to their family. Where this is not possible, Foster Carers can be a bridge to achieving permanence or become long term foster cares, if it is appropriate for the child and foster carers.

Foster Carers prepare children for any future move. This preparation is vital to the success of any future placement.

Managing Behaviour

Many children placed in foster care may display difficult or challenging behaviour due to traumas they may have experienced. There is a need for all concerned to agree the best way to manage this behaviour. Corporal punishment is not an option. Foster Carers should not feel alone in managing this behaviour and can ask for a planning meeting or discuss their concerns with their supervising social worker, child's Social Worker, or out of hours Social Worker.

Managing behaviour should be addressed in Care Plans and Placement Planning

meetings. Foster Carers must attend training around these issues as part of their development.

Related topics - [Corporal Punishment](#) and [Sanctions](#)

Matching

Matching is an important process when identifying foster carers to fully meet children's individual needs and to ensure children experience stability and security. Thorough matching provides the best possible opportunities for children and fostering households to enjoy a long and stable relationship and avoid children having multiple moves.

Medicals

A child should have a medical examination prior to a placement taking place unless this has been completed within the previous three months. Should this not be possible, because of the circumstances at the time of the placement, the examination must be completed within 14 days of the placement being made. Thereafter, a child less than five years must have a medical examination and a written assessment at least six-monthly intervals. Children over the age of five must have a medical examination annually.

Consent Forms

Foster Carers cannot give consent for medical treatment unless it has been approved within the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record) and all foster carers should receive a signed copy of the delegated authority/consent at the placement planning meeting. If consent is required, then the Foster Carer should contact and discuss with their supervising social worker and child's Social Worker.

Medication

All medication must be kept in a locked box. Medication can only be given on the guidance of a doctor. A record of any medication given to the child must be

made on the child medication record sheet by the foster carer. Foster Carers receive training as part of their induction and ongoing development.

Missing from Care

If a child is missing you must contact the police and the child's Social Worker, or their Team Manager, immediately when you become concerned. Protocol for actions to take when children are missing will be written and agreed within children's individual plans and placement planning meeting. If it is outside normal office hours, it is an expectation foster carers will contact the Emergency Duty Team. You must then complete a form (schedule 7), which gives the circumstances in which the child went missing, what you did about it, who you told, where the child was found and when returned. This form should be shared with your Supervising Social Worker and child social worker within 24 hours.

When a child is returned home the Police will want to ensure the child's welfare and speak to the child, usually alone. An independent return home interview (IRHI) will be arranged by the child's social worker.

Please read the [Children and Young People Who Go Missing or Run Away From Home or Care Protocol](#)

National Minimum Standards in Foster Care

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services focus on delivering achievable outcomes for children.

See the [Fostering National Minimum Standards](#)

Related topic - [Fostering Service Regulations 2011](#)

Overnight Stays

There is no statutory duty for DBS checks to be carried out on adults in a private household where a child might stay

overnight. DBS checks should not normally be sought as a precondition of an overnight stay.

Decisions on overnight stays should in most circumstances, be delegated to Foster Carers and arrangements for such decisions written into the Placement Plan. Children Looked After should as far as possible be granted the same permissions to take part in normal and acceptable age-appropriate peer activities as would reasonably be granted by parents of their peers.

Only where there are exceptional reasons or when overnight stays become regular, discussions with child social worker and supervising social worker is required. The circumstances in which it is necessary to obtain the approval of the Social Worker should be included in the Placement Plan (Placement Information Record)

Related topic - [Babysitting](#) and [Contact](#)

Parent and Child Fostering Scheme

Parent and Child Foster Care is for children and their parents, either mother or father or both together, who are in need of support with, and/or assessment of, their parenting skills. This may also involve more than one child. This may arise due to the legal status of the parent, e.g. parent(s) are themselves child/children in care. Or where there are concerns for the welfare of the child, due to the parents' care of the child. They are often court directed assessments.

In some circumstances the parent is a looked after child. Foster Carers would provide support for a young parent and their child, in these circumstances the baby would not necessarily be a looked after child.

Parental Responsibility

Parental Responsibility is the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority to make decisions for a child on their care and upbringing. Foster Carers

do not have legal parental responsibility; this is retained by the child's parents. Parental responsibility is shared between parents and the Local Authority when a Care Order is made. Therefore, the parents have to be consulted before any major decisions can be made on behalf of the child, e.g. change of school.

When a Child Arrangement Order is made, parental responsibility is shared between parents and the holder of the Child arrangement order. When a Special Guardianship Order is made, parental responsibility is shared between the parents and the holder of the Special Guardianship Order although the holder of the Special Guardianship Order has the final say in decision making.

Related topic - [Consents](#)

Passports

Children and young people who are cared for by the Local Authority should be issued with a passport. If you have any queries about passports being issued, you should discuss with your supervising social worker. It is strongly advised by the Fostering Service not to book holidays prior to children and young people being in receipt of their passport. See the [Guidance notes for Social Services Departments when applying for passports on behalf of 'looked after children'](#)

Pathway Plan

All young people looked after will have a pathway plan by their 16th birthday. The young person in partnership with their social Worker and Personal Advisor (PA) will agree the plan to support the young person to achieve independent living and what support children social carer will provide. Pathway plans are similar, to care plans although are more focus on preparing young people for adulthood and are reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and continue to be effective to the young person's individual needs. Foster Carers will be expected, where appropriate and agreed, to help young

people in their care to move on to independence.

Related topics - [Preparation for Adult Life](#) and [Independence](#)

Permanence Planning

It is always the preferred option for children and young people to live and grow up with their family. In the instance children and young people are not able to remain living at home (for many reasons), Permanence is always considered when discussing children and young people's care plans, to achieve security, sense of identity and lasting stability until adulthood and beyond for all children and young people. Delays in permanence planning can impact on placement stability, achieving outcomes, attachment, and all areas of child development. Permanence can be achieved through long-term fostering, child arrangement orders, adoption and special guardianship order.

Long term fostering is a commitment to a child or siblings until adulthood. The children become very much part of the foster family, although they may still have family time with their family of origin. The foster child needs to feel secure and loved and is, therefore, involved in family life as any other member of the household. This includes going on holiday, attending family celebrations, etc.

Permanency is vital for many children who need to have stability and a sense of belonging and know the Foster Carers are committed to them throughout childhood and beyond.

Sometimes during the child's childhood long term Foster Carers decide to apply for a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order. This can increase the child's security within the family and increases the carer's ability to make decisions in respect of the child without the Local Authority. A Child Arrangement Order and Special Guardianship Order give the Foster Carers shared parental responsibility with any other person who has parental

responsibility in respect of the child, but not the Local Authority. This order overrides the care order in this instance and children's looked after status ends.

For further information please read the [Special Guardianship Orders Procedure](#)

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All children looked after will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is reviewed regularly in conjunction with their Child Looked After (CLA) review. The PEP forms part of children's care plans. PEP's provide essential information to ensure that appropriate support is in place to enable the child to achieve the targets set. It is also a record of the child's leisure interests and educational achievement.

Related topic - [Education](#) and [Looked After Children Educational Service](#)

Pets

All animals carry with them some potential Health and Safety risks. A common-sense approach to managing these is required. Because of the particular risks associated with dogs, a dog assessment will be carried out during the assessment process and subsequent annual reviews or when new pets join the household. Any changes or new pets, supervising social worker to be informed.

Foster Carers are asked to consider carefully whether to introduce a pet or another pet once approved, as some pets or dogs are unsuitable.

Photographs

Foster Carers are expected to purchase school photographs of the children they care for. These are important records of childhood milestones. Although it is important that Foster Carers take photographs of important events and compile a photograph album this should only be done with the child's consent and when they clearly feel comfortable about

it. Children should only be photographed in suitable clothing and never in the bath or bathroom. Photographs of Children Looked After should not be placed upon any social media Forums/Sites. In some instances children's photographs will not be permitted publication for certain school events and online coverage. The placement plan and delegated authority will record instances when this is not permitted due to safeguarding.

Related topic - [Life Story Work](#)

Placement of a Child

When you are asked to have a child placed with you the Fostering Service will provide you with a guide as to questions to ask during your conversation with the fostering SSW to ensure your skills and knowledge are matched accordingly to the child/young person's individual needs. It is important you consider all the information shared and think about you and members of your family including existing Child Looked After, and any support that you think might be required to fully meet the individual needs of the child/young person.

You must have suitable sleeping arrangements that would not put this child or another child at risk of bullying or abuse.

You must consider how you will take the child to school if this is necessary, without the use of transport services or taxis, and how you will fit in more appointments, family time and meetings etc. and yet be certain you can meet the needs of the child before agreeing to the placement. Placement refers to the Foster Carer household and is not a word used to describe children and young people.

Placement Planning Meeting

Sets out details of children's individual needs and informs the matching process. Clarifies day to day arrangements, including family time, routines, bedtimes, health and education needs. Provides

foster carers with information of their role to fully meet children's individual needs. Identifies roles and responsibilities of others to fully meet identified needs. Delegated authority is confirmed with the foster carer. Placement planning meetings are held when children are placed in your care. The purpose of the Placement Planning Meeting is to finalise the Placement Plan and provide and confirm information and agreements with foster carers.

Placement Endings

The best possible outcome for children moving on from foster carers, is returning to live with their family or moving to live with their siblings.

In the event foster carers are facing any difficulties or doubts of the longer-term care of a child, they should share their feelings with their SSW who will listen and offer the identified support.

In the unforeseen event foster carers have made the decision to stop caring for a child, it is expected their SSW is informed in the first instance and will provide guidance of next steps.

When children and young people are known to be at risk of having a change in their foster carers, a stability meeting is arranged for all professionals involved to share the issues and offer solutions. All attempts will be made to maintain a child's placement to avoid a break in their care experience, which impacts on all stages of a child's life. In the event children must move on, foster carers are expected to work with the department and in the child's best interest, to allow for the most appropriate matching and a planned move.

Under no circumstances should children/young people be informed that they are moving, until planning has been confirmed and the child's social worker has spoken with the child.

Pocket Money

Child/young person should be given pocket money to be spent as they wish, although guidance may be required. The Fostering Service stipulates an amount to be paid from the Foster Care Allowance and this will be written into children and young people's plans. The expectation is all children and young people have bank accounts to ensure savings can be continually deposited and children and young people learn as they are growing up about the value of money, managing finances and budgeting when they reach an age to begin preparing for independence.

Savings on children and young people's behalf is to ensure when leaving care there is a substantial fund to offer some security, due to some young people not having a safety net of families offering financial support if the need arises.

Policies and Procedures

All Wirral's Council's Policies and Procedures relating to children are stored online.

See [Safeguarding Procedures](#)

Ponds, Pools, Hot Tubs and Water Features

To make sure children play safely outdoors it is vital that all water activities are thoroughly supervised. Weight bearing covers are needed for ponds, drains and water butts. Pools in play areas need to be emptied promptly and the temperature of the water needs to be checked. Ponds, pools, hot tubs and any other water vessels will be assessed as part of your household health and safety plan completed jointly with your supervising social worker. All appropriate actions must be actions prior to children and young people being placed in your care.

Positive Behaviour Techniques

Behaviour management techniques need to be relevant, age appropriate, justified, used sparingly and time limited. They should follow on from the behaviour or action as quickly as possible. Behaviour management strategies must be discussed with the child's social worker and supervising social worker and agreed with children where appropriate to do so.

Sanctions that are unacceptable include those that:

- Humiliate/shame a child or young person
- Cause them to be ridiculed

The following disciplinary measures must never be used:

- Corporal punishment
- Deprivation of food and drink
- Restriction of contact or visits/ communication by telephone or post to or by a child or young person
- Any requirements that a child/young person wears distinctive or inappropriate clothes
- Use or withholding of medication or dental treatment
- Use of accommodation to physically restrict a child or young person
- Intentional deprivation of sleep
- Imposition of fines (except by way of repayment or compensation)
- Intimate physical examination of a child/young person
- Isolation of a child/young person in consequence of their behaviour. If isolated for other reasons there must be adult supervision
- Excessive use of sending a child/young person to bed early
- Adults modifying a child/young person's behaviour through bribery or use of threats
- Excessive shouting

Removal of personal belongings to which the child is likely to have an emotional attachment to, e.g. photographs of their family.

Preparation for Adult Life

Preparing a child for adult life is a very important part of parenting and therefore fostering, as all children need to learn skills for living if they are to successfully achieve living independently as an adult.

Preparation should start at a very early age and continue throughout childhood. For a child in foster care this learning can become disjointed and skills they may be assumed to have learned at an earlier age and can be overlooked. It is therefore important that Foster Carers have a good knowledge of child development and an understanding of the child's skills and abilities whilst caring for them.

Foster Carers should provide all foster children with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning the skills necessary to prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood. This will ensure that children are effectively prepared for the time when they will no longer be looked after. This should cover:

- Providing opportunities to children in your care to manage money, plan their finances and understand about the costs of utilities and other services;
- Supporting children to develop the range of self-care skills that will be needed as they make the move to greater independence – including capacity to budget for, plan and prepare nutritionally balanced meals; time management and an understanding of the expectations necessary to manage in the world of work; self-care and social presentation;
- Enabling children to develop basic housekeeping and household maintenance skills – e.g. by providing them with the opportunity to do their own laundry and participate in routine household cleaning and other tasks.

- Develop and maintain relationships with others;
- Understand their sexuality and establish positive, caring social and sexual relationships;
- Develop self-esteem;
- Prepare for the world of work and/or further or higher education;
- Develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self-care, and understanding and taking responsibility for personal healthcare;
- Develop financial capability, knowledge and skills; they are given a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding and the allowance is distributed or withheld in a fair and transparent manner
- Children are encouraged and enabled to choose their own clothes and personal requisites that they buy and to buy these through normal shopping arrangements. Younger children are accompanied by the Foster Carer or others and older children are given the choice of shopping alone or with the guidance of the Foster Carer.

When a young person's plan is to move to independent living or semi-independent living they will have been actively involved and consulted in the decision-making process. Preparing a young person to move on is vital to ensure they feel confident with this key transition. There will be key professionals identified to support the young person, including young people's Foster Carers, Personal Assistant, and other relevant professionals who are involved to develop and implement the Pathway Plan. Preparation for adult life is a specific standard required under the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and all Foster Carers are required to attend training as part of their induction programme.

Private Fostering

Private Fostering is when a child or young person under 16 years old (or under 18 if disabled) goes to live with someone for 28 days or more by private arrangement (without the involvement of a local authority) with someone who is not a:

- parent
- close relative (brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or stepparent)
- guardian or a person with parental responsibility

Private foster carers might be:

- friends of the child's family
- someone willing to care for the child of a family they don't know
- relatives not mentioned in the list above, for example a cousin or great aunt.
- Examples of private foster care arrangements:
 - children sent to this country for education or health care by parents or guardians living overseas
 - Teenagers living with a friend's family as a result of problems at home
 - children on holiday exchanges
 - children whose parents' study or work involves unsociable hours, which make it difficult for them to use ordinary day care or after school care

Source: wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/private-fostering

If you are aware of any child/young person living under private fostering arrangements, please discuss with your allocated SSW or contact the Integrated Front Door service:

Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Tel: 0151 606 2008 option 2

Outside of these hours Tel: 0151 677 6557

Email: ifd@wirral.gov.uk

Recording

This is the term used for keeping a record of children and young people's day to day and significant events. As a part of foster carers agreement, Foster Carers are expected to keep diary recordings for each child. It is good practice to write to the child and for children to be involved in the information that is recorded and be given the opportunity to add their own comments. As this is a record for the child in the future this needs to include information about, personal achievements, nice things they have done, places they have visited as well as things that haven't gone so well, disclosures, worries and contact with professionals. Sometimes you will be asked to provide these for evidence in court. Therefore, they must be factual, balanced and keep opinions to a minimum. Your Supervising Social Worker will provide you with a copy of the guidance on recording and additional diary sheets. Diary sheets should be emailed to your Supervising Social Worker at intervals specified by your Supervising Social Worker.

Recording and reporting training is part of post approval training and is mandatory for all Foster Carers.

Right Side of Care

[Right Side of Care](#) is the council's website for children and young people looked after and care leavers; providing information about a range of topics including fostering, advice on their rights, complaints process, the care system and much more. The website is also a useful resource for foster carers to support children and young people you care for.

Running Away

Related topics - [Missing from Care](#) and [Events and Notifications](#)

Safe Caring

Each fostering household must have a Safer Caring Plan, which is completed

jointly with your supervising social worker and updated annually in line with your annual review or when there are significant changes within your household. When children come to live with you, a child specific safer care plan will be completed with your supervising social worker and reviewed in line with care planning and when significant changes occur.

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all foster carers and part of the post approval training, and refresher courses should be attended.

Safeguarding Children

Ensuring children and young people are safeguarded and wellbeing is promoted is a collective and also an individual responsibility, which means we must all take measures to reduce the risk of harm and report concerns when appropriate. Foster carers are in a position of trust and the important bonds between foster carers and children will enable some children to trust you to share their experiences, which for some children the information they share would require passing onto relevant professionals, to ensure the most relevant actions are taken. Foster carers recording of information shared is important. Training courses and available and ongoing guidance and support will be provided by your supervising social worker.

Foster Carers must attend mandatory induction safeguarding training and ongoing training to include child protection procedures, signs of abuse, caring for a child who has been abused.

Related topic - [Allegations](#)

School Trips

Children in foster care are expected to have access to school trips and activities. The Foster Carer can claim the expenses for trips which are an integral and necessary part of the school curriculum by completing an expense claim form and attaching a copy of the school letter detailing the activity and all costs. Schools often require parental consent for the child

to take part. This will be discussed at the child's Placement Planning Meeting and recorded in the Placement Plan. There is also a fund (PEA) to support a child's social and academic progress with activities and equipment. This can be accessed through the child's social worker and should be identified at the PEP meeting.

Related topics - [Consents](#) and [Finances](#)

Sexual Health

The child's Social Worker should agree with the carer how age-appropriate sex and relationship education should be provided. This should be set in the wider context of independence, self-care protection, skills and relationships. He/she should also be responsible for providing, or arranging to provide, the child with information on appropriate behaviour in relation to both them and others.

It is important that a child knows what is regarded as 'appropriate' behaviour, particularly in relation to physical and sexual conduct. This is especially important where the child's early experiences have been abusive or neglectful. Children should be given such teaching at as early an age as possible, and it should be renewed periodically.

Foster Carers should give young people, including under 16s, information on sexual health and contraception and details of where and how to access local services. If there are any worries about a child/young person, you should discuss with the child social worker and supervising social worker.

Foster Carers are provided with training as part of their induction, there are specific services available for children and young people and ongoing training courses for foster carers.

Short Breaks

Where appropriate, requirements for foster care placements for short breaks are different from those of children being fostered for longer periods. In particular, birth parents remain central to the

promotion of health and educational needs. The arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Signing for Activities

Related topic - [Consents](#)

Signing for Medical and Dental Treatment

Related topic - [Consents](#)

Smacking

Related topic - [Sanctions](#)

Smoking and Vaping

Prospective Foster Carers are advised at an early stage that smoking habits (including vaping) will be considered during assessment along with other health issues. The Smoking Policy is clear that Foster Carer's who smoke cannot foster children under the age of five. Advice and assistance are available to promote no smoking. Applicants who smoke are encouraged to consult their GPs. Information in regard to the harmful effects to a child is included in the preparation and training programmes for prospective and approved foster carers.

The need not to smoke in the presence of the child is stressed and that the foster home is smoke free. Babies and young children up to the age of two years and all children with respiratory problems or a medical condition exacerbated by people smoking, are at particular risk and it is not in their best interests to be placed in households with smokers.

Children and young people who smoke are also at risk. Steps should be taken to discourage children in foster care from smoking.

See [Wirral Fostering Service Non Smoking Policy](#)

Social Worker

Every child looked after has an allocated Social Worker. A good and effective relationship between the carers and the child's Social Worker is important both to the welfare of the child and as a vital part of the support process.

There should be regular joint visits to the carer by the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker, the first being to draw up the Placement Agreement.

It is important to have meetings between the family, the child's Social Worker and the Foster Carer at regular intervals during a placement. The care planning meetings should take forward work identified in the child's care plan and monitor progress.

Social Worker Visits

The first responsibility of the child's Social Worker is to the child in placement. They must satisfy themselves that the welfare of the child placed continues to be suitable and provided for within the foster placement.

There are statutory requirements to visit the child at minimum prescribed intervals and to see the child alone.

A Social Worker must visit:

- From time to time as circumstances may require
- When reasonably requested by the child or the foster carer
- Within the first week of placement, and then at intervals of not more than six weeks during the first year of placement
- At intervals of not more than three months, if the child has been placed for one year
- Weekly, if the child has been placed under regulation 24. This is when a child is placed in an emergency with a friend or family member who has not yet had a full foster carer assessment completed

A Social Worker will prepare a report from these visits and will take into account what the child is saying about the placement, the suitability of the bedroom space, living conditions and the clothing provided. The Foster Carer's ability to follow the care plan includes promoting family time, health, education and meeting the child's needs.

The Social Worker and the Foster Carer share information about the child to ensure they are working together to meet the child's needs. The child's Social Worker will need to see a child on their own each time they visit. This will usually take place in the child's own bedroom or communal area in the home.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Wirral SEND provides a range of support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families. This is achieved by working in partnership with parents, carers, children, education settings, and other agencies such as health, social care, and the voluntary sector. Wirral SEND Partnership also help parents/carers to navigate Wirral's 'Local Offer' of services. The Local Offer provides information on what services children, young people and their families can expect from a range of local agencies, including education, health and social care as well as information about other local support services. Knowing what is out there gives you more choice and therefore more control over what support is right for children and families.

For more information: [Local Offer website](#)

Special Guardianship Orders

In the event children and young people are not able to live with their parent(s), Special guardianship offers children security of a long-term care arrangement until they reach aged 18 years and beyond, and the child/young person

looked after status ceases. Special guardians share parental responsibility with children's parent. Foster Carers can express their wish to apply for a Special Guardianship Order for a child they are of have looked after. Certain conditions can apply depending on time scales and other factors. Your child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker will be able to give advice about this.

For more Information on [Special Guardianship Orders Procedure](#)

Related topics - [Parental Responsibility](#) and [Permanence Planning](#)

Statement of Purpose

The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, 2011, Section 16, states that every Fostering Service should have a clear statement of purpose which is available to, and understood by, Foster Carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures, and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.

Wirral Fostering Service is committed to complying with the standards set out in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011) which are underpinned by the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000.

See the [Statement of Purpose](#)

Statutory Visits

Related topic - [Social Worker Visits](#)

Supervising Social Worker

Foster Carers receive supervision and support from a named, appropriately qualified, Social Worker.

The Supervising Social Worker ensures each carer is informed in writing of, and accepts, understands and operates within, all standards, policies and guidance that governs the Fostering Service.

When Foster Carers are approved, carers receive and agree to the 'Foster Carer Agreement' as required by the 'Fostering Services Regulations'.

The Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker will be the first point of contact for all foster carers. The Foster Carer has access to this handbook and any information and advice which will enable the Foster Carer to provide consistent high quality care for all children placed in their home. This may include facilitating access to other Social Work and Professional Support.

Supervising Social Worker Visits

Supervisory visits are held regularly with Foster Carers. Meetings provide opportunity to openly discuss all areas of fostering and day to day living. These supervision visits have a support, training and monitoring purpose and are recorded. Foster carers will receive a copy of all supervision visits for agreeing and signing.

All Foster Carers have an electronic record and include records of supervisory meetings. There are occasional unannounced visits, which are a minimum of at least once each year.

Support

It is important that support is provided to children and Foster Carers in various ways and by various agencies and may include some of the following:

- Supervising Social Worker
- Wirral Fostering Services
- Social Worker for the child
- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- Children Guardian's
- Advocacy/Independent visitor
- Support Workers
- Emergency Duty Team Social Workers
- Personal Assistants

- Youth Offending Team Workers
- LACES Team Teachers
- Learning Mentors
- Support Teaching Staff
- Family Support Workers
- Social Inclusion Officer
- Education and Cultural Services
- Libraries
- Designated Nurse for Children Looked After
- Community Paediatrician
- Compass team
- GP
- Health Visitors
- CAMHS
- Occupational therapists
- Support Groups
- Family Centres
- Training
- Community Based Projects
- Police
- Brook Clinic

Foster Carers are advised to share any concerns/worries without delay, regardless of if you are unsure if it requires a discussion and or support. Children's Social Workers and Supervising Social Worker welcome discussions and will support with accessing assistance from any of the above service that best meets the identified need.

Support groups for foster carers are held frequently and your supervising social worker will provide you with all the details. We understand that it can be a bit daunting to join a new group. In recognition, we offer mentors who can support you and accompany you to the groups. We are a friendly bunch and look forward to meeting and welcoming new members.

Carers are paid appropriate fees and/or allowances in accordance with the agreed

levels for the type of foster care placement the child requires and the current registration status of the Foster Carer.

These fees and allowances are reviewed annually. Equipment required for children with a specific need is provided.

Tax

There is a fixed rate tax exemption of up to £10,000 per year which is shared equally among any Foster Carers in the household. This means you do not have to pay tax on the first £10,000 income you make from Fostering.

For more information: [Tax](#)

Related topics - [Benefits](#) and [Finances](#)

Training

Prospective Foster Carers attend introductory courses on fostering. The main intention is to give as much information as possible about what is involved in being a foster carer and preparing for the fostering task.

Foster Carers in partnership with their supervising social worker will devise a training plan, also known as a personal development plan (PDP). This is usually completed during the assessment period and foster carers annual review but can be reviewed at any time when relevant.

Upon approval, all Foster Carers need to complete the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workbook within twelve months if mainstream carer or 18 months if connected carer. This involves the Foster Carer compiling a portfolio of their learning and experience as a Carer, showing that they understand and meet the Minimum Standards for Foster Care. Workshops are arranged to support carers through this process, although carers can work independently. The Supervising Social Worker will give advice and guidance and responsible for signing each standard once complete.

To fully complete the TSDS workbook, Foster Carer's must complete mandatory training courses in First Aid, Recording, Equality and Diversity, Managing Behaviour, Child Protection and Internet Safety.

There are numerous opportunities for Foster Carers to attend training courses on a very wide range of subjects but there are specified subjects foster carers must cover in their post approval (induction) training which are:

- Safe caring
- Health and Safety in the home
- Health and hygiene
- First aid
- Promoting health
- Managing behaviour
- Child protection procedures
- Signs of abuse
- Caring for a child who has been abused
- Building self-esteem
- Bullying
- Respecting diversity
- Listening to children
- Communicating with children
- Recording
- Promoting education
- Preparing for adult life
- Life History work with children
- Medication policy
- Child development
- Sexual health
- Leisure plans
- Complaints and advocacy
- Allegations
- Promoting and managing contact
- Understanding the law
- Assessment and action records
- Missing from care
- Self-care for Foster Carers

Other specific training is available to carers to meet the specific needs of the child they are caring for, or in which carers are interested. Information about training courses available is sent out to carers from the Fostering Services Team. Foster Carers can then contact the person directly to book themselves a place. Training is mandatory for all foster carers. If training is not completed, this will be raised in supervisory visits, and foster carers will be supported to complete training.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS)

TSDS exists to improve the lives of children, young people, their families and carers by ensuring that all people working with them have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice.

TSDS for Foster Carers have been designed to support carers from the stages of pre-approval through to their first year of fostering. The standards set out what foster carers should know and be able to do in a clear way.

These standards apply to new Foster Carers and to those who are already caring for children and young people, including long-term and Family and Friend's Foster Carers.

Following on from approval, Foster Carers are helped to achieve the workbook portfolio by a mixture of workshops, training and working with their Supervising Social Worker. The workbook is expected to be completed within 12 months of approval for mainstream and 18 months for connected person and will be signed off by the Supervising Social Worker and when completed, verified by a manager. A certificate of completion will then be issued. The Foster Carer's portfolio must be completed before their first review.

Transport/Taxis

Children in foster care often feel different and stigmatised. This can have a negative effect on the way they feel about themselves and their self-esteem suffers. Being taken to school by taxi or transport can compound these feelings. It is important their Foster Carer takes and collects the child from school, or, if they are old enough and able, they need to walk or use public transport to school.

Foster Carers meeting these needs can also improve the child's feeling of stability and confidence. The child can rely on the knowledge that their carer will be there for them when they come out of school, instead of the child not knowing or not having the certainty that the same driver will be there for them after school.

This practical care is, in fact, providing very important emotional support to the child. On this basis it should be very rare transport/ taxis are used to take children to school and every consideration of how you can do this must be given when you are asked to have a child placed with you.

Whistleblowing

In general terms, whistleblowing occurs when a concern is raised about danger or illegality that affects others and it is in the public interest that it is brought to someone's attention.

The person blowing the whistle is usually not directly, personally affected by the danger or illegality. Consequently, the whistleblower rarely has a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into their concerns. As a result, the whistle-blower should not be expected to prove their case; rather he or she raises the concern so others can address it.

A grievance or complaint is, by contrast, a dispute about the persons own position and has no additional public interest dimension. When someone complains,

they are saying that they have personally been poorly treated.

This poor treatment could involve a breach of their individual employment rights or bullying. As such these types of issues should be dealt with under the complaints policy or grievance procedure.

Wirral Change

Wirral Change is a Black and Racial Minorities Outreach Service offering information, advice and guidance on jobs, education, training, self-employment, health and wellbeing, as well as signposting to other services for racial minority people on the Wirral.

As a BAME multicultural organisation, we offer advice and guidance on:

- Benefits
- Housing
- Employment
- EUSS
- Asylum and Refugee
- Health and Wellbeing
- Immigration
- ESOL for non-English speakers

Wirral Change, St Laurence's School, St Laurence's Drive, Birkenhead, CH41 3JD (directions displayed on map)

For more information: [Wirral Change](#)

Wirral InfoBank

Wirral InfoBank is an online directory of community groups, services, and activities that can support your health and wellbeing.

For more information: [Wirral InfoBank](#)

Wirral Multicultural Organisation

The Wirral Multicultural Organisation encourages multicultural understanding and acts as a focus for all multicultural activities in Wirral.

The Organisation has its own purpose-built centre and has staff that helps Wirral's ethnic minority communities to access services, employment, and training and meets their general needs.

For more information: [Wirral Multicultural Organisation](#)

Youth Justice Service

The Wirral Youth Justice Service aims to prevent offending by children and young people. It was established by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and is made up of staff from numerous agencies, including the Local Authority, Police, Health, Probation Service, Career Advisors, and other Voluntary Organisations.

The new coordinated way of working attempts to take a holistic approach to tackling the problems that young people present when they are in trouble. This can mean offence focused work, victim work, drug/ alcohol work, education, training and employment work, and family work.

The Courts or Police send most of the young people and their families to the Youth Offending Team, but the Youth Offending Team is developing its preventative work with initiatives such as On Track and Youth Inclusion Programme. These initiatives aim to work with young people and their families at an early stage to reduce the risk of future offending.

For more information: [Wirral Youth Offending Team](#)

Useful contact numbers

Arrowe Park Hospital

Switchboard 0151 678 5111

Brook Clinic (Appointment only clinic)

0151 670 0177

brook.org.uk

Children Social Care (EDT)

0151 677 7557

Family Rights Group

0808 801 0366

Fire Service (non-emergency)

0151 296 5925

Fostering Service

0151 666 4618

Foster Talk

01217 585013

MIND

0300 123 3393

NHS Direct

111

OOMOO

0151 733 2665

POLICE

999

POLICE (NON-EMERGENCY)

101

Pilgrim Street

0151 666 3718

The Hive

Wirral Youth Zone, Bright Street,
Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 4EA

0151 705 8000

The Fostering Network

020 7401 9582

Wirral SEND Partnership

0151 522 7990 (staffed Mon to Fri
9am-4.30pm)

email ias@wired.me.uk

Young Minds

Parent/Carer helpline

0808 802 5544

Youth Offending Service

0151 666 1829

Links and Learning Resources

CAMHS LGBTQ+ Resources for Children, Adolescents, Parents and Schools

nelft.nhs.uk/camhs-lgb

Foster Talk

fostertalk.org

Family Rights Group

frg.org.uk

NSPCC

learning.nspcc.org.uk

Right Side of Care

therightsideofcare.com

SEND

localofferwirral.org

The Fostering Network

thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

ZILLO Wirral

A website for young people living in Wirral to get the lowdown on the latest events, arts, culture, news and expert health and wellbeing advice.

zillowirral.co.uk